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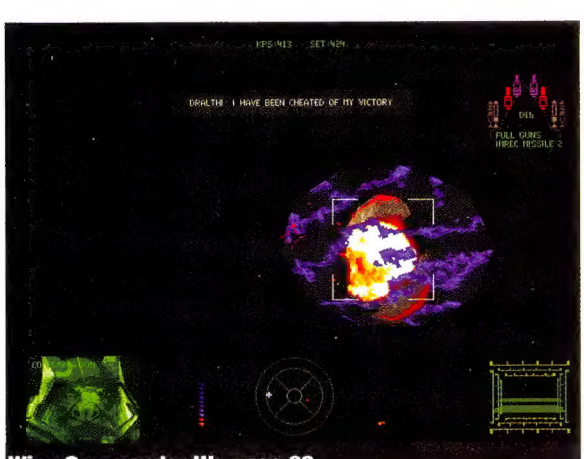

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GAMING IN TRANSITION?

Winter CES™ — as is usually the case — was more of an opportunity for us to see how known projects are coming along than a chance to get early info on the next round of releases, but there were a few surprises nonetheless. Check out our report for the details, but in general there were spot opportunities to see early demos of some interesting (though predictable — no genre-stretching efforts at this stage) new software and chances to preview some of the technologies planned for use in the next generation of game design.

VR headsets are proliferating rapidly, that's clear; while a few expensive (or not so expensive but not very user-friendly or flexible) units have been available recently, it's clear that the competition in this area will be heating up, which will no doubt drive prices down and make more sophisticated technology available to a wider audience more quickly.

More importantly for PC gaming, the new videogame platforms from *Sega*, *Nintendo* and *Sony* look like they'll actually be significant competition for current PC-based home entertainment very soon. Certainly the first-person perspective shoot-'em-ups that have been so popular of late on the PC are now do-able on such systems; but, surprisingly, even some companies previously dedicated solely to serious simulation on the PC were talking about considering developing for the mass market elsewhere. And we're not talking about the kinds of radically oversimplified ports we've seen in the past, but separate, independent development here.

The limiting factor, of course, is the television screen; even with 425 lines of horizontal resolution, the average possible pixel size on a home TV set is nowhere nearly as precise as that on the typical computer monitor. If mass market platforms are to prove truly competitive with the PC, they'll either have to have the capability to hook up to a computer monitor directly or television technology will have to move towards the high-resolution capability currently limited to the typical computer CRT. The day when a 27" screen can do 1024x768 pixel resolution with a .28mm mask aperture is still quite a ways off. Meanwhile, efforts to do PC-style software on a *Nintendo* or *Sega* will have to deal with a much coarser image. Software can be designed to look very good even with such limitations, but the *type* of software that can be designed to work well therein is restricted. Anything using text that the player would be reading for hours at a time, for instance, would be excluded (aha! yet another reason why many companies are moving away from any kind of text-based interface, eh?).

The mass market platforms mentioned above, however, *are* already capable of running excellent 3D simulation-style software on a television, and it's our guess that, for instance, the plans to use *Silicon Graphics* workstation software to do design for such platforms suggests that this may be one genre we'll see taking off (so to speak) on hardware other than the PC or Mac. It would certainly be a revelation for an audience trained to expect lots of comparatively simplified arcade-style play to discover the joys of designs which are even slightly more sophisticated in the way they depict movement and control through a constructed three dimensional space. If designers can do the kinds of equations necessary to simulate the complex interactions of air, sea and land vehicles on a **Saturn** (*Sega*) or **Ultra 64** (*Nintendo*) or **PSX** (*Sony*), more power to them!

And then there's **3DO**. While software releases for this system continue to develop, it looks like it's a platform that may well be left behind by the big boys in this arena, unless new technological improvements occur in a next generation design (no news yet on whether this is in the works).

In any event, this all leaves PC-oriented gamers with the question of where the PC might take them next, beyond the realms now being absorbed by what used to be called "cartridge" game systems (they now mostly use CD-ROM). While *Nintendo* is stepping into an arena that the PC has been inhabiting for awhile now, there's no question that technical advances in graphics and sound and software are moving PC gaming ahead as well. It's no longer even trendy any more to speak about rendering things in *3D Studio*, for instance — that's taken for granted. *Alias*, *Softimage*, *Multigen* and other related tools are names you'll be hearing more of as the next iteration of PC gaming develops.

In software technology, the technique most likely to lead to the widest range of impressive results involves the measuring of data points on a real-world moving object (most typically, a human being), using those data points to develop the skeleton for a 3D animation of all possible movements, overlaying that skeleton with lifelike, photo-realistic graphics, thereby creating cyber acting. The various mixed efforts to do acting either with real or computer-generated characters (or animated images) will thus at the least be supplemented by, and at the most *replaced* by character design and implementation using this style of technology. Once widespread and widely available, it will allow any designer to fashion any kind of creature to engage in any kind of imaginable environment or interaction desired, in a way that will look as spectacular as anything we've seen in the past five years done with special effects in the movies.

Then — once all the tech is in place and taken for granted — the question will be right back where it started. Who can tell a good story? Who can direct the actors plausibly and coherently? Who can write intelligently, persuasively, imaginatively when scripting such performances? Who can put together a good combination of puzzles, or a reasonable real-world environment? Who has the training and talent to work originally in the visual arts?

Those questions will always be with us, regardless of technology, platform, situation. Eventually we'll reach a technological plateau, and we'll be back to the issues that always remain most important. Looks like there'll be room to grow down the line, in any event. Hope you enjoy the report!

Steve Wartofsky, Editor

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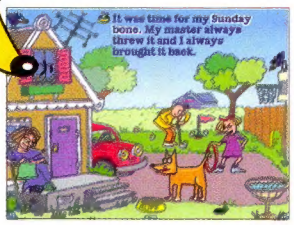

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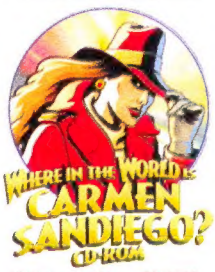

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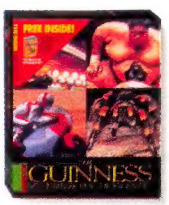

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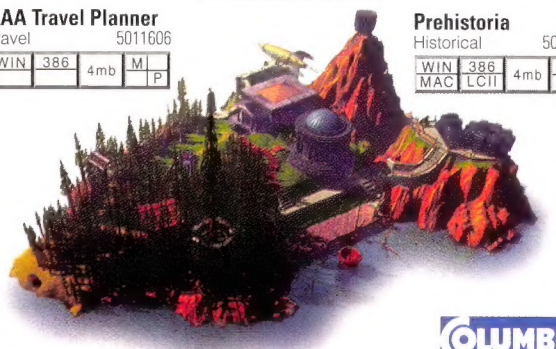

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This year's show at CES™ meant one important new consideration for PC gamers: Windows™. While a number of games are still planned for DOS, it's clear — particularly for adventures, CRPGs and strategy games — that the future is within a Windows interface on the PC, whether Windows 95 or plain old Windows 3.x.

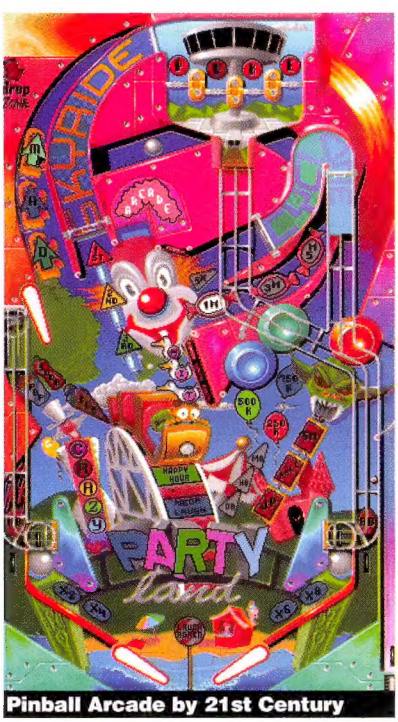
This also means that yes, the future holds more upgrading of not only processor speeds but system resources for gameplay. A few major releases at the end of last year were already looking for more than 8MB of RAM (16MB will no doubt become a de facto standard), and it's likely — with all the DLLs (and conversations with people at *Microsoft* about Win95 suggest these are only going to proliferate) — that hard disk space is going to have to be extensive, despite the savings offered by CD-ROM designs. Figure 1 gigabyte drives as a minimum sometime over the next year.

This is interesting, because hardware requirements for computer gaming on the PC are quickly going *way* beyond what most people would need for most non-gaming PC applications. We're ending up in a positively weird situation, where the home market is getting equipped with faster, more up-to-date hardware than most businesses are in need of.

The show wasn't particularly impressive, frankly, from a game design innovation standpoint. Much that has been done is being done yet again, only this time with more flash. On the other hand, a number of proven ideas in computer game design are persisting, and are likely to end up producing games that — if not innovative — are at least solid.

Most companies seemed anxious to downplay the flash factor in their designs at Winter CES, emphasizing the quality of gameplay in their promotion — a heartening development. The next big spate of releases (which looks like it'll happen sometime between March and July 1995) thus looks more likely to be of steady quality than those that were slated for Christmas 1994 — less pushing of the envelope, more care with design, development, testing, etc.

As has been the case for the past year and a half, the sheer *quantity* of material being released remains overwhelming; it'll be more important than ever this year for publications covering the industry to sift through things to get to the really good stuff. We'll do our best here. Now, on with the show!



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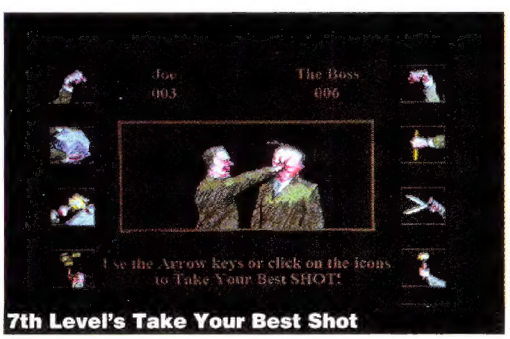

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21ST CENTURY ENTERTAINMENT

Pinball Arcade CD-ROM: Perhaps one of the best computerized pinball simulations yet unveiled, **Pinball Arcade CD-ROM** will feature eight new pinball tables and an on-line history behind the pinball phenomenon.

Synnergist: Representing a radical departure from the miniaturized pinball parlors, **Synnergist** is a foreboding animated adventure title placing Tim Machin on the trail of a murderous psychopath. Unfortunately, a lot more than murder is uncovered as the story unfolds.

47 TEK

Sento & Creep Clash: Two more fighting games for the PC, but what sets these apart is that they are in true 3D, looking like high-resolution versions of **Virtua Fighter**. They use the *MGA 3-D Accelerator* chipset found on the latest *Matrox* cards. They will also soon support the new 3D chips from *Cirrus Logic* and *3-D Labs*. They are incredibly good looking, but do we need more fighting games?

7TH LEVEL

Return to Krondor: This is the official title for *7th Level's* sequel to **Betrayal at Krondor**. It's in its earliest design stages at this point, but a preliminary story has been written by Raymond E. Feist and pre-production has begun, but don't expect anything before 1996.

Take Your Best Shot: This MPC CD-ROM is based on the animation of Bill Plympton, who has produced numerous short animation segments that have run on MTV. His sadistic sketch-like art is added to a number of really silly arcade games with no apparent redeeming social value (thank God).

ACCESS

Links 386 CD-ROM: The CD-ROM version of **Links386 Pro** features Harbour Town and Banff Springs. The CD-ROM is enhanced with aerial fly-by's and golf tips (much like the multimedia version of **Microsoft Golf**). The scary parts of the game are the new sound effects — one setup finds comedian Bobcat Goldthwait supplying the sounds as your caddie. Regular **Links 386** courses will play fine with the CD-ROM version but will have no fly-by's. The new **Championship**

ATTRACTION

n in Las Vegas, Nevada at the 1995 Winte
w. In-depth coverage by Steve Bauman,
ofsky

Courses will have the fly-by's, and the first of those will be Prairie Dunes in Kansas (Kansas?). The **Championship Courses** will also be compatible with **Links 386** and **Golf**.

Links Pentium: The next generation of **Links** will feature 24-bit color and numerous other improvements (and it will not *require* a Pentium, but be optimized for same). The highest mode will be (gulp) 1024x768 resolution with 16.7 million colors. The clubhouse will be work in 3D like **Under a Killing Moon** and will allow the player to actually move around in all of its lavish splendour.

Under a Killing Moon 2: The sequel to **Under a Killing Moon** will not be called this, but it is in production and will be 50% bigger than the first. A professional screenwriter has been hired to work on the script. Expect it later this year.

ACCOLADE

Brett Hull Hockey 95: One title sports fans were hip checking each other over was **Brett Hull Hockey 95**. Featuring Al Michaels' commentary, the new slapshot sim features exhibition games, an 11 game short season, a 42 game half season and an 84 game full season, which wraps up with a run for the championship cup. Including a special coaching mode which allows the editing of player abilities and a robust stats compiler, this game will make the infamous St. Louis Blues' right-winger proud.

Live Action Baseball: The second game in the **Live Action** series, **Live Action Baseball** again features the commentary of Al Michaels and allows players to coach a Major League baseball franchise courtesy of actual live action footage taken from a variety of filmed locations.

Cyclemania: *Accolade* was touting a recent upgrade to their motorcycle simulation **Cyclemania** which enables players to enjoy head to head play via a modem and network option. Available free of charge from *Accolade* at (408) 296-8400, the two new upgrades support two player head-to-head mode or six player network competition.

No one can fault *Accolade* for releasing the balance of their eagerly anticipated titles prior to CES. Making it under the wire were **Battle Isle 2200**, **Hardball 4**, **Live Action Football** and **Unnecessary Roughness**.

ACTIVISION

Mechwarrior 2: The Clans: This perennial trade-show favorite will finally make its appearance in the first quarter of 1995. It's still the only FASA sponsored Mech game and will support network and modem play, VR goodies, *Thrustmaster* add-ons, and all sorts of other nifty things. This will also be the last DOS game from *Activision*, as all of the rest of their lineup are for Windows CD-ROM.

Planetfall: Floyd's Next Thing: This fourth quarter release is the latest sequel to what is probably one of the finest adventure games ever created, **Planetfall**. Steve Meretzky is on hand for the design and the spec calls for live actors, high-resolution 3D backgrounds, and the reappearance of Floyd as an animated character. Whatever you imagined he'd look like, it'll probably be something else. Kinda like meeting long-time online friends for the first time.

Zork: Nemesis: This all-new Windows-based **Zork** adventure is slated for release in December of 1995. It is planned as a surreal, romantic horror story (hmm) that shows a different side of the whole **Zork** mythology (double hmm). Expect more of what made **Return to Zork** so popular (video, graphics, etc.).

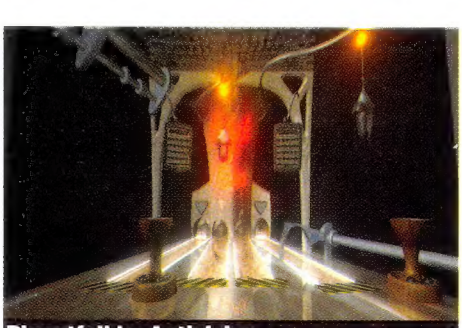
Atari 2600 Action Pack: 15 award-winning Windows games for $29.95? Surely you jest? Nope, nor is the name Shirley. These are all conversions of *Activision's* classic lineup circa 1980 and feature such amazing games (with their original graphics and sound) as **Pitfall!**, **Kaboom!**, **River Raid**, **H.E.R.O.**, **Chopper Command**, **Grand Prix**, **Boxing**, **Cosmic Commuter**, **Crackpots**, **Fishing Derby**, **Freeway**, **Frostbite**, **Seaquest**, **Sky Jinks**, and **Spider Fighter**. This will be followed up by later volumes that could include some *Commodore 64* and/or *Atari 800* titles (yes, we put in our vote for **M.U.L.E**).

Shanghai: Great Moments: This is a multimedia treatment of the classic **Shanghai**, with animated historical tiles, a live-action emcee (actress Rosalind Chao), and loads of special effects.

Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure: Pitfall Harry, Jr. stars in this sequel to one of the classic games from the **2600 Action Pack**. This is a Windows version of the excellent cartridge game and features ambient sounds recorded in the actual jungles of the world, 50 minutes of audio and 22 music tracks. Look for it in the third quarter.

The Great Game: This adventure is an espionage thriller using the real-life experiences of former CIA Director William Colby and Oleg Kalugin, former head of the Russian KGB. It will get the full **Return to Zork** treatment of actors, video, etc., and will be released in late 1995.

HockeyDrome: This title is a real-time multiplayer cybersport where players compete in a 3D virtual arena in league, tournament, or pick up games over a network or modem. It combines a first-person **DOOM**-like perspective with elements of hockey, soccer, and lacrosse (sounds a bit like *LucasArts'* classic **BallBlazer** from the early 80's). Look for it in late 1995.



Planetfall by Activision

Atari 2600 Action Pack from Activision

Activision's Shanghai

The Big 3 from Alliance Interactive

Avalon Hill's Advanced Civilization

ADVANCED GRAVIS

Firebird: After recently releasing the **Phoenix** joystick, *AG* apparently decided to address the kinds of issues most likely to generate criticism of that design — and amazingly quickly, too! The result is the **Firebird** joystick, which is (we love a paradox) both a scaling-down and a scaling-up of the original **Phoenix** design. Scaled down because there are now fewer buttons to push, and no rudder-pedal equivalent (though there are throttle and trim controls). Scaled up because the **Firebird** now competes handily with *Thrustmaster*'s hardware in the area of programmability, with an on-screen system which allows up to seven keystrokes to be assigned to each button (including different keystrokes for hold and release). As with the **Phoenix**, the programming is simplicity incarnate, and has been made even more flexible with easy click and drag options allowing the copying or swapping of functions between buttons.

The **Firebird** is still a desk-top unit, but sits in the lap much more comfortably than the **Phoenix**, and should be a real draw for those who find the limits of the original units programming restricting. Oh, and it'll be quite a bit cheaper, too.

ALLIANCE INTERACTIVE

War Patrol: Surfacing for a shipboard inspection, **War Patrol** is a simulation covering the entire breadth of World War II submarine operations in the Pacific. Several different submarines are available to command throughout the three dozen historically based war patrols.

Onslaught: This fictitiously set, strategic level, hex based wargame uses post World War II land, sea and air units to wrest control of a huge island from a foreign empire. Lots of state-of-the-art graphics and pop-up windows aid the player immeasurably as s/he locks horns with one of the toughest computer controlled opponents in a long time.

The Big 3: Similar to **Axis and Allies**, **The Big 3** places the player in command of either the Axis, Allied or Soviet forces in World War II. A strategic level wargame, players can reenact every aspect of the "war to end all wars"!

AVALON HILL

World at War: **Stalingrad** was finally all set to ship just days after it was on display at CES. Graphically the game is stunning, and if the AI lives up to the legendary battle's ferocity, then both *Atomic Games* and *Avalon Hill* have yet another hit on their hands.

Advanced Civilization: Looking even more spectacular than ever thanks to some additional graphical enhancements, **Advanced Civilization** should live up to all the hype its surname promotes. Actually, it's a direct port of the *AH* boardgame that can support up to eight players.

1830: By the time you read this, 1830 should already be shipping. Based upon the board railroad simulation of the same name, 1830 should have lasting replay value since the game will be able to generate random maps as well as the historical map included.

Blackbeard: This hex based port of the board game bearing the same Jolly Roger, Blackbeard covers piracy and combat on the high seas. If pillaging is your game then **Blackbeard** may be your name.

Third Reich: Languishing in development for upwards of two years now, **Third Reich** is receiving its final coat of AI paint and should invade the retail markets very shortly now. Faithful to the wildly popular boardgame down to the last Tiger tank, **Third Reich** should capture the imagination of computer wargamers as successfully as it did the boardgaming market.

BETHESDA SOFTWORKS

Daggerfall: Probably one of the companies out there most dedicated to listening to gamers and responding to their fondest wishes, *Bethesda* has a real treat planned for us with the release of **Daggerfall**. What was visible at the show further confirmed the power of the company's 3D gameworld engine, and added to that clear evidence that the story will be rich in imaginative possibilities, the interactions with NPCs frequent and fascinating. Todd Peterson stepped aside to discuss the latest developments with us, and indicated that there will be some exciting new developments in the movement possibilities within **Daggerfall**, among other

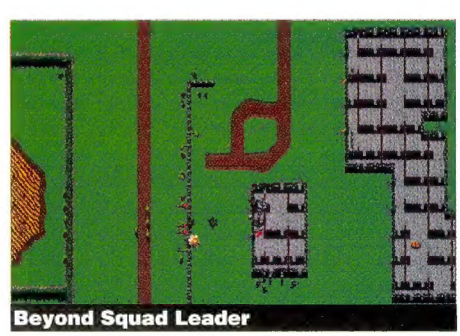
S HIGHLIGHT

OND SQUAD LEADER

and *Atomic Games* have long the wraps on this eagerly awaited a sigh of relief they've finally e of the layers of veiled mystery vildly anticipated **Beyond Squad**

e 1977 John Hill wargame entiled nd the updated 1985 **Advanced Beyond Squad Leader** repesents o take the hugely popular game d counters to the cathode tube.

omic Games, the creators of the **V World at War** series, *Atomic* has om scratch a brand new game engine to support this extremely ambitious project. Already taking some jibing from critics who'd rather see them create a straight conversion of the board wargame classic, many of even their most ardent detractors couldn't help but giggle in delight. As we've indicated in two exclusive previews in earlier issues, **Beyond Squad Leader** takes the eighteen year old board game system down a few side streets few even knew existed. Utilizing a tile based movement system, a top down, micro miniatures viewpoint and emphasizing control over *individual* infantrymen and vehicles rather than squads, the game looks every bit the stallion *Atomic* and *Avalon Hill* cracked it up to be.


Beyond Squad Leader

Judging by what we've seen thus far, *Atomic* and *Avalon Hill* have once again proven why they're not only back on top of the wargaming heap but why they're there to stay. Looks like only an artillery barrage can clear that crest now!

You can hear your breath,
your boots pounding on metal stairs.
There's only one way out.
20 more feet...15...10.
You're almost there when suddenly
from out of nowhere
an 8-foot-tall green alien drops down
and lunges at you with a spear, leaving you
approximately .08 seconds to act.

This may be a good time to
mention the superior processing speed
of a Power Macintosh.

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Power Macintosh

Apple

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things.

One focus of the design is *continuity*: continuity in plot development, continuity in the relationships between NPCs and NPC communities (and their reactions to players), and clear connections between the object-oriented goals set the player and the development of the story. This will *not* be a "go get this then get that" style of CRPG, but rather a carefully conceived fantasy, all elements of which will contribute to the player's growing understanding of the situation he or she's been placed in. The technology will be put quite definitely in the service of the goal of role-playing, in ways we have yet to see on the PC.

Terminator: Future Shock: *Bethesda* was also showing off their latest **Terminator** game, **Terminator: Future Shock**, a design which looks to launch them right to the top of the first-person perspective action heap (a place they were long before it became fashionable on the PC, we might add). **Future Shock** may well go **System Shock** (our first-person CRPG of the year) one better, with an extremely logical and efficient inventory and control interface and a highly flexible and responsive gaming environment.

All in all, two *very* solid and compelling products under development here!

BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT

Warcraft: Nothing new to report except the fact that *Blizzard* will be uploading a unit editor free of charge for anyone interested in weaker or even stronger units. Look for it on most of the major BBSes.

THE BRUCE ARTWICK ORGANIZATION

Tower: *BAO* is getting ready to roll with their hottest new simulation, **Tower Controller** (see comments in *The Hangar* this issue). With a very long learning curve but more real simulation than any efforts to represent air traffic control have heretofore proved capable of, **TC** will prove absorbing and challenging to anyone interested in the real-world subject.

Scenery Disks, Flight Shop: Also ready to ship at the time of the show were **Europe I** and **Las Vegas** scenery disks, both representing *BAO*'s efforts to move both 3D graphic and IFR environments forward for **Flight Simulator**. As with **Japan**, new innovations in the way vertical 3D terrain is represented are included (i.e. the mountains look hot), while extra intensity in the IFR environment is available for those running out of VORs and ADFs to dial up. **Flight Shop** will provide options to design planes along with the originally-planned paint kit, giving users the chance to tweak flight models along with the visuals. **Flight Shop** should thus be for **FS5.x** what at least the aircraft part of **Aircraft & Scenery Designer** was for **FS4**.

CAPSTONE

Casino Tournament of Champions: If gambling has always left you in the basement of the poor house, take heart! *Capstone's* **Tournament of Champions** includes all of the major exciting casino favorites you've been betting on for ages.

Grandmaster Championship Chess CD-ROM: More of the same chess challenge, only now it's been souped up with modem and network play and some new chess sets and boards.

Bruce Artwick Organization's Tower

Scenery Disks, Flight Shop from BAO

Zorro CD-ROM: Billed as an action adventure, this third person jaunt based upon the legend of Zorro emphasizes action over adventure. Cut a swath through the 10 levels and you too can call yourself Zorro!

Harpoon II: Battleset 3 - Cold War: This award winning wargame returns to the 80's, postulating a hypothetical encounter between the resurrected Warsaw Pact navies and NATO.

Harpoon 3 Multimedia CD: **Harpoon II** comes of age as the former receives a CD-ROM makeover. Full motion video, new sound effects and enhanced game play may not spell a new game but a new look and feel.

Harpoon II Scenario Editor: Need we say more?

Crystal Skull: Joining forces with Rob MacGregor, author of a series of *Indiana Jones* novels and contributing writer on *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, this adventure game wasn't available to comment upon, so stay tuned for further details.

Witchaven: *Capstone* has taken advantage of an enhanced *Apogee* 3-D game engine to create this mystical 3-D action game. Again, more to follow down the road.

TekWar: William Shatner has inked a deal with *Capstone* to develop an action/adventure game based upon the *TekWar* universe Shatner inspired. Although details are sketchy, rumor has it that the game will sport the same enhanced 3-D *Apogee* engine that will be found in **Witchaven**. Details are far and few between concerning science fiction writer Roger Zelazny's collaboration with *Capstone* on a CRPG due out later this year.

CORE DESIGN

B.C. Racers: Representing the first of four releases from *Core Design* (the English firm which produced **Heimdall** and **Curse of Enchantia**), **B.C. Racers** is a tongue-in-cheek look at driving in the prehistoric age. Although it's no NASCAR simulation, this fast and furious pedal to the metal thriller should keep the best of us entertained, or at least dodging Raptors, for hours.

The Big Red Adventure: This humorous animated adventure subscribes to the belief that Communism may soon return to Russia and it's up to you to foil the plot of the old guard schemers. Travel to the former haunts of Lenin and Stalin, across 100 of the most appealing hand rendered locations ever to grace the steppes of Mother Russia.

B.C. Racers from Core Design

There you are, flying through the air
with the greatest of ease when
the air-to-air missile locks on you
and starts homing in. Let it close to 4 miles.
Roll 90 degrees into it and start laying chaff
and flares like crazy. It's still coming.
Keep turning. G forces. Everything's going black.
Turn harder or you're dog meat.
You're dog meat.

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can't do everything.

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Power Macintosh

Apple

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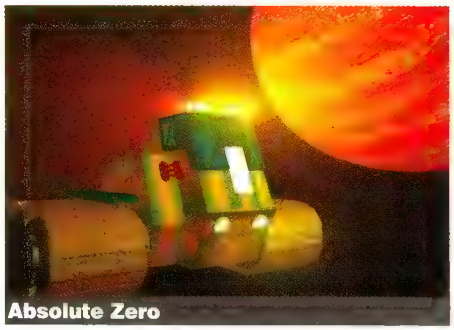
ABSOLUTE ZERO

Domark digs in for a long, cold battle against aliens on Europa


Absolute Zero

Ice is nice, except when it conceals alien beings ready to blast their way through the surface to destroy your home. That's the case in **Absolute Zero**, a new space combat simulation from *Domark*. The flying nightmares in this case will come up against the well-equipped player, who's got over two dozen futuristic weapons at hand to employ from the cockpit of ten different sci-fi vehicles (both land- and air-based).

Absolute Zero offers over 100 missions to work through in a gameworld that is intelligently conceived. Animation details are limited to those places where detail proves most significant, i.e. the targets. The outer space atmosphere of the gameworld is more vivid than usual, as the player's planetside-oriented focus makes for interesting horizons and visuals (think **Starglider II** in texture-mapped 3D graphics and you'll have some idea of what we're talking about). Object synergies provide a series of tactically interesting situations, where using your combat abilities to target the opponent's resources as well as the opponent make substantial differences in the outcome of the mission.

As with some other recent efforts, *Domark* is planning on providing a graphics-accelerated 1024x768 SVGA mode, which with the right hardware (as of this writing the S3, ATI and Weitek accelerator chips are definitely supported, and a spectacular new Yamaha accelerator may have support in software here as well) will probably animate even more smoothly than the plain old DOS SVGA 640x480 mode. Dual joystick and *Thrustmaster* support will also be available for those interested in really digging into the fantasy.

Not just another space combat game, **Absolute Zero** looks to be oriented instead towards giving the player a series of different vehicle perspectives from which to view disintegrating aliens. Given enough story context, this should be a pleasure to fly and drive through.

Scottish Open: If some of the other golfing sims have left you in the sand traps then try **Scottish Open** on for size. It's a quick and easy golfing simulation utilizing 3 different camera angles set amidst two amateur and two professional golf courses.

AH-73M Thunderhawk: This arcade-like helicopter simulation features a planet gone haywire wherein you, as the leader of a U.N. sponsored elite combat team, must restore order to the fragile near future world.

CYBERDREAMS

I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream: We have no code, so we must guess what this game will be like. This adventure takes the player into a post-apocalyptic world and allows you to assume the roles of five different characters to defeat a super computer that has destroyed all of humanity. What sets this game apart is its reliance on the inner lives of all of these characters — each has personal demons that they will have to face and overcome over the course of the game. They will have to deal with courage, friendship, insanity, rape, self-sacrifice, and emotion. Yikes, sounds spectacular, but how will it play as a game?

Dark Seed II: This late 95 Windows-based sequel to the not-for-the-squeamish original finds you, as Mike Dawson, still having some nasty nightmares. When your high school sweetheart is murdered, you are the suspect and must clear your name before those wacky Ancients destroy mankind. H.R. Giger will again supply the inspiration for the amazing artwork.

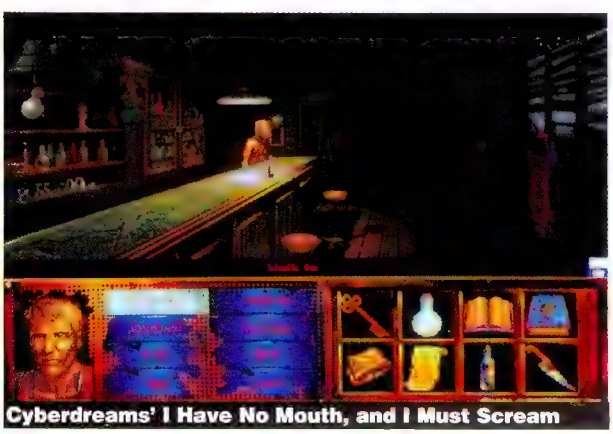
Hunters of Ralk: This is the first of a series of adventures being created by Gary Gygax, who sorta created something known as *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*. It features a complete gaming world and a first-person texture mapped gaming engine that didn't look all that impressive until I found out it was a Windows title running in high-resolution graphics. Now it looks *really* impressive, but you will have to wait until late 1995 to see for yourself.

DISCIS

Jewels of the Oracle: This is a graphically attractive puzzle game that should satisfy fans of both **The 7th Guest** and **Myst**. You need to solve a number of logic puzzles in order to collect the necessary components for completion of the story.

DOMARK

Flying Nightmares 2000: The next generation of the **SVGA Harrier/Flying Nightmares** engine, this Harrier sequel promises to upgrade the 3D environment to one more competitive with the latest round of air combat simulations (more intense graphics, increased target-richness) and, more importantly, make use of a hot new graphics accelerator chip from Yamaha which may become for 3D graphics what their OPL-3 chip has become for FM sound (i.e. an extremely affordable standard). In a demonstration at their suite, *Domark* compared the performance of a PCI bus P90 without such a chip against the performance of one using Yamaha's chip. In the former case, **FN2K** was doing about 7 frames per second; in the latter, that jumped to 20-24 frames per second. Clearly, were the Yamaha chip to get widespread support (as it is rumored it is already getting), we'd be on our way to almost photo-realis-


Cyberdreams' I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream

Jewels of the Oracle from Discis

tic 3D environments – it's that good.

Tank Commander: At a time when a bunch of tough tank-type games have just been released (**Zephyr**, **Armored Fist**, **Metaltech: Earthsiege** to name a few), *Domark* has decided to put the simple fun back into tank gaming. **TC** is going to be a simplified tank sim, with the options to either control the tank and turret separately or together. The emphasis is on multi-player here (IPX-protocol network and modem), with enough hilly 3D scenery to be useful for berm tactics. Tanks will cheerfully mash up what they call "lubrication" (i.e. infantry) in the real world of military training (moms, send your kids to dentistry school), and do other game-oriented kinds of violence to the surrounding terrain. Choppers can be used for scouting purposes, and other tactical support units will come into play as well.

Absolute Zero: a sci-fi simulation adventure (the first of a planned series), this one puts the player in contest with strange outer space beings as s/he defends a distant ice-borne colony from attack. Totally neat ground weapons like the Rail Cannon make this one quite attractive. As with all of *Domark*'s latest generation of 3D releases, detailed, SVGA-style animation has been provided in spot intensities, guaranteeing smooth graphics play (see *CES Highlight*); and the ground objects have been organized in interconnected groups, so that, for instance, an object generator such as a supply station will be tied up with a bridge and a distant unit in need of supply in such a way that collapsing the bridge will prevent transport of further supplies to the computer opponent. Quite a bit of tactical thought will have to go into running this fantasy simulation.

The Orion Conspiracy: *Domark* is treading adventure game ground with this one, a futuristic megacorporate-dominated murder and intrigue mystery. Full speech throughout the game, plenty of SVGA graphics, a "revenge the death of your son" plot, and minimal hardware requirements. Anything is possible.

ELECTRONIC ARTS

While the company wasn't displaying much at CES, there *was* some very important news for *Bullfrog* fans: the company has been acquired by *EA*. This probably means more resource for both sides, and improved testing and distribution opportunities for Molyneux & Co.

AYUNP: meanwhile, the makers of **Flashback** and **Relentless** were on-hand to give us a quick, quiet look at their next, **As-Yet-Un-Named Product**, a game which combines first- and third-person perspectives with a continuation of the storyline present in **Flashback**. While **AYUNP** looks to risk falling into the near-bottomless pit of first-person shooters, it's saved by plenty of interesting puzzle design; the player can solve a number of game situations in more than one way, making progress through the game more than just a question of shooting all the bad guys (in this case, aliens with morphing abilities). Let's just hope the difficulty level is toned down a tad, at least for the lazy American audience. No new words on **Creation**, except that it looks like it'll be Winter 95 at the earliest according to most recent reports.

EMPIRE INTERACTIVE

The Civil War: From the makers of **Fields of Glory**, **The Civil War** lets you reenact the ghastly struggle to reunite the 19th-century polarized factions of America's north and south. Utilizing micro miniature battlefields and *Empire's* patented Intuitive Combat Control Interface (ICCI), players can reenact the entire campaign, all the while accessing a wealth of pertient on-line information available at the click of a mouse.

CES HIGHLIGHT

POWERHOUSE

Perhaps one of the most startling improvements any game company made at this Winter's CES came from none other than *Impressions Software*. Long known for releasing games of acceptable but uninspiring graphical allure, *Impressions* heeded their critics and took a quantum leap into the mid 90's. In **PowerHouse**, for example, gone are the days of tired, low res VGA brushstrokes in favor of the much crisper appeal surrounding SVGA glamour. Beyond the superficial topcoat, though, lies a well conceived simulation which focuses upon the worldwide scramble to research and acquire ever more stalwart means of energy. You see, **PowerHouse** pits four mega companies in a heated race to dominate the ever dwindling supply of natural energy. Players must "test new power sources, research cutting edge technologies negotiate with governments and build power plants to expand their empire."

Boasting a powerful political and economic model the game can also support head-to-head play via the modem support provided. Supporting *Microsoft's* widely acclaimed WinG graphical library, **PowerHouse** looks to excel not only as a graphical pioneer but looks to share in the forefront of game design concepts previously dominated by a very select few.

Impressions' PowerHouse

Red Ghost: One part strategy and two parts simulation, this entry into a bleak futuristic world pits players in a desparate struggle to rid the world of a covert organization bent upon bringing down the democracies of the free world.

FOX INTERACTIVE

Die Hard 3, Virtual Springfield, X-Files: These three titles are slated for late 1995 appearances.

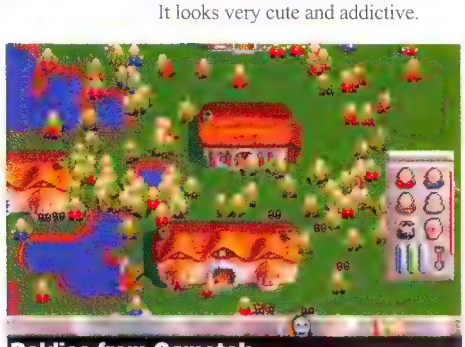
GAMETEK

Bureau 13: This game from *Take 2 Interactive* is based on the popular pen and paper role playing game. You control a team of agents who identity and track all forms of paranormal and supernatural phenomena. It is a combination role-playing and adventure game and will require you to manage your team and assign them to certain tasks in order to stop an ultimate bad guy bent on taking over the world.

Frontier: First Encounters: This latest **Frontier** sequel features new and improved graphics and full motion video. What the series has been famous for the largeness of the world has not been compromised for the chrome add-ons, so fans of the originals should be pleased with this one.

Baldies: The follicle-y challenged should find much to be offended by in this game of arcade strategy. It's a combination of **Lemmings** and **Populous** where you direct your tribe of dome-tops through over 100 levels, while the poor saps die painful deaths from hidden traps and such. It looks very cute and addictive.

Empire Interactive's Red Ghost


Baldies from Gametek

Super Street Fighter II Turbo by Gametek

The Legend Returns.

Dungeon Master II

Years ago, it set the standard for role playing games. Now, just when the nightmares are starting to fade, it's back . . . and it's bigger and badder than ever. Introducing Dungeon Master II: The Legend of Skullkeep.

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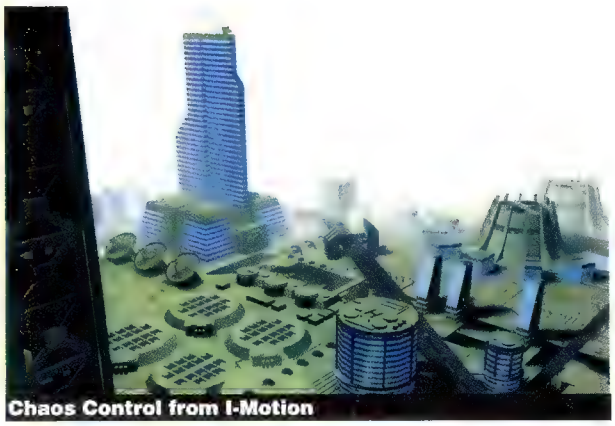
The Wait Was Torture.

GTE Interactive Media's FX Fighter


Chaos Control from I-Motion

Fairway to Heaven: As you wind on down the road, you'll find this game combines the very best holes from eighteen different courses into a single perfect course. This CD-ROM has videos of each hole and interviews with Jack Nicklaus, Pete Dye, and Ben Crenshaw.

Super Street Fighter II Turbo: Hmm, why didn't they add an "Ultra" in the name. Yup, it's a faithful conversion of the inexplicably popular arcade fighting game.

Quarantine 2: While they weren't officially showing this title, a brief chat with designer Rod Humble revealed that this sequel to every L.A. driver's fantasy game will feature SVGA graphics and an improved car model.

BloodNet & Master of Orion: Both of these titles are going to be released by *GameTek* for the Mac.

GREMLIN INTERACTIVE

Slipstream 5000: **Slipstream 5000** represents a cutting edge first-person perspective racing game set in the far flung future. Remember, though, Slipstream aircraft are not only fast, but deadly. Lap your fellow pilots too readily and you may end up as space debris come time for the checkered flag.

GT INTERACTIVE

Heretic: From the chasms of hell which spawned **DOOM**, **Heretic** represents *id Software's* latest attempt to foil mankind's productivity and the world's computer networks. Set in a mystical first-person perspective universe, players manipulate a host of new weapons and abilities as they test their reflexes anew against the latest challenge from the netherworld.

DOOM II Screen Saver and **DOOM II Bonus Levels**: For those of you who just can't get enough of that ornery four letter craze, *id* plans on releasing a **DOOM** screensaver and additional levels for **DOOM II**, designed by some of the world's foremost freelance **DOOM**scapers.

Super Karts: One of the most entertaining racing simulations from the other side of the pond has finally made it to the New World. Reminiscent of **Super Mario Kart**, **Super Karts** is a top notch go kart simulation that supports both single player, 2-player split screen and eight-player network races. Multiple camera perspectives and a pulse pounding soundtrack round out this spectacular offering.

Troy Aikman Football: Featuring live action footage of the world's premiere quarterback, this football simulation includes the rosters and stats of the 94-'95 season and supports five different play modes; 1 player, 1 player coach, 2-player head-to-head, 2-player coach and demo. Multiple camera angles, slow motion video replays and a host of options should spell three-peat for the Cowboys and football fans world over.

Ultimate Pinball: If you still haven't satiated your appetite to swat ball bearings then this title may be for you. **Ultimate Pinball** includes six highly detailed pinball tables that can support up to three balls at one time

continued on page 116

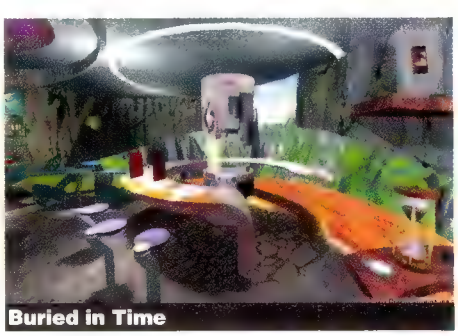
CES HIGHLIGHT

BURIED IN TIME: THE JOURNEYMAN PROJECT 2

Sanctuary Woods visit the past and future

Buried in Time is the sequel to **The Journeyman Project**, an in-retrospect ahead of its time adventure that suffered from a poor PC conversion (the **Turbo** version remedied this). The game takes place in a future where time travel has become a reality. You are falsely accused of altering history and must travel through the shadows of time, finding clues as to who actually committed the crime and generally avoiding trouble (and trying to keep from altering the future for real). You will have to solve a number of puzzles and operate various devices in past and future worlds. A beginner mode is also available, and offers assistance for novice gamers.

The universe is beautifully rendered, with great attention to period detail. Seven different worlds to explore are present, allowing you to visit Leonardo da Vinci's private laboratory at midnight in 1488, explore Richard the Lion-Hearted's castle, and search for sacrifices in a Mayan temple in 1050. The game uses completely computer rendered backgrounds overlaid with live-action video, and while the integration of the two isn't perfect, it still looks better than other similar designs. In addition to being able to rotate in a rendered room, you can also look up and down (which will be required in order to solve some puzzles). The game will feature an original stereo soundtrack and loads of sound effects (which is one thing the original game did very well with). *Presto Studios*, the developers, has responded to all of the criticisms of the original and addressed its problems. The video is larger than similar titles and the integration of video to static screens is seamless. This 2 CD-ROM adventure for MPC and MAC will be released for both platforms in April 1995.


Buried in Time

Buried in Time

Build a Railroad Empire with Iron Horses and an Iron Will!

1830

Railroads & Robber Barons

Roll against history's greatest!

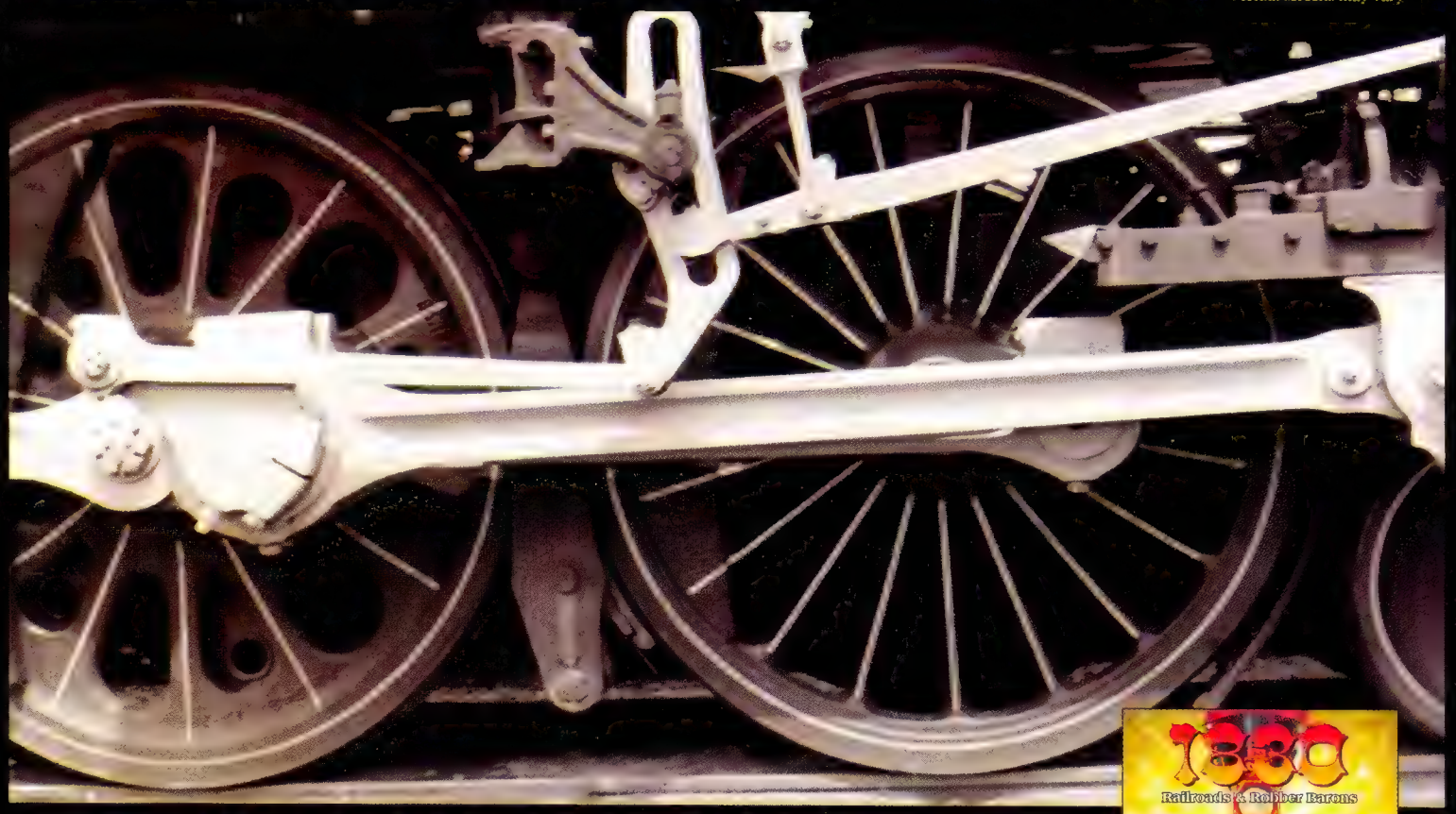
Welcome to the 19th Century!

With immigrants pouring in, America is poised for explosive westward growth. Magnates famed for their greed and business acumen rush to cash in. Can you handle the challenge?

Lay track, build stations, purchase trains, and manipulate stocks to build an empire of iron and steel. History's greatest Robber Barons will try to stop you by undercutting your lines and buying out your stock. Your only weapons are money and trains. Will your empire succeed or fall under the wheels of the competition?

Break through the competition!

Actual screens may vary



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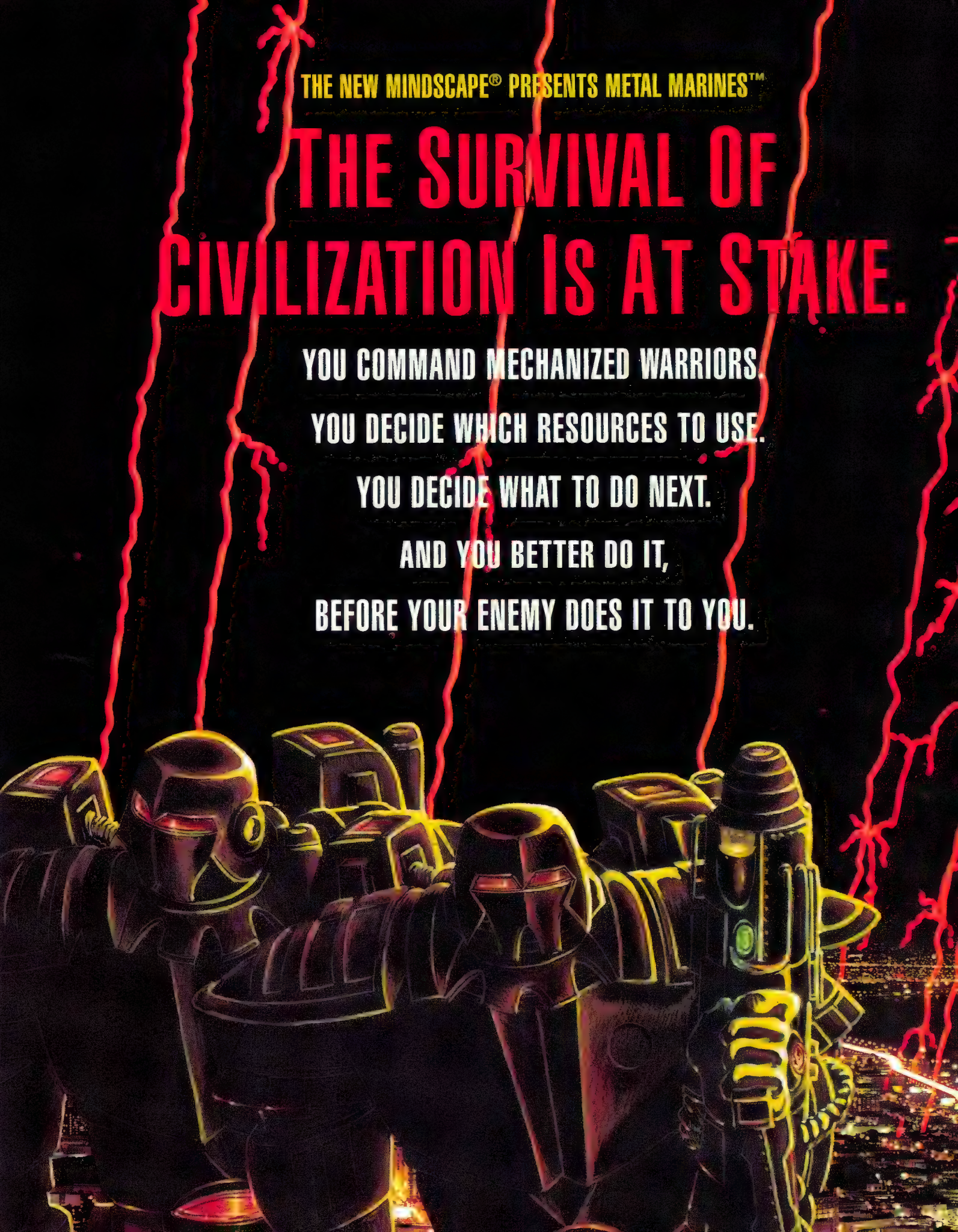
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Reader Service No. 32

PREVIEW

TERRA NOVA HIT

Steve Bauman dons his battle armor and dodges grenades

LookingGlass Technologies has a reputation for creating some of the finest games seen on the personal computer. Their **Ultima Underworld** series redefined the entire role-playing genre and set a new standard with its seamless interface and cutting edge technology (how many smooth-scrolling first-person RPGs have been released since?). The enhanced CD-ROM version of *LookingGlass'* own **System Shock** comes closer than any game to unseating the **Underworlds'** combination of gameplay and a unified world, but hot on its heels will come **Terra Nova**, a different kind of simulation that could be influential in the same way that the **Underworlds** were.

We detailed the plot of the game for you last month, so now we figured we'd give you the scoop on the actual gameplay. Briefly, **Terra Nova** is a first-person simulation of futuristic squad-level combat (we mistakenly referred to it as a role-playing game last month) that will also have a multi-player option, for both cooperative and adversarial play. It is not being designed as a hardcore military simulation along the lines of a **Beyond Squad Leader**, but it will have some things in common with that game. To make your **Terra Nova** stew, you might want to add a dollop of *Electronic Arts'* **Seal Team** with a little of *id's* **DOOM** and perhaps a smidgen of **System Shock** thrown in for flavor.

Physics 101

Perhaps **Terra Nova's** biggest innovation will be its modeling of the physics of bipedal motion. The physics guru at *LookingGlass* is Seamus Blackley, who not only has a Ph.D. in Physics but also drives one of the coolest cars on the planet, a 1972 BMW 2002. He is the project leader on **Flight Unlimited**, so he hasn't been able to complete the physics model for **Terra Nova** yet, but they did have some demos of what they're trying to accomplish.

Your character is a human in a suit of body armor that makes you

Multiple windows can show you a near 360 degree view

Inside your home base

Immerse Yourself in LookingGlass' Virtual Worlds

You're puttering around in a long dungeon corridor when suddenly fireballs start flying over your left shoulder. You spin around to see a wizard hurling the fireballs. You turn to run because you're low on strength, but at the end of the corridor is a ledge with a river a few hundred feet below. You know that it will take you a long time to get back to your current location if you end up in that river, so jumping off the ledge really isn't an option. You turn to your right. A door. You try to open it, dodging the fireballs of the approaching wizard. It's locked. You whip out your handy lockpicks and pick the lock. You open the door, only to be confronted by a room full of skeletons who start to attack you. At this point it's either jump or die, so you plunge into the murky waters to your safety. The wizard hurls one last fireball at you, but it falls harmlessly into the water.

This scene, which Doug Church, project leader of **System Shock**, recounted is one gamers' memory of something that took place in **Ultima Underworld**. What made Church so interested in this particular encounter was that none of it was pre-scripted. The only thing that was canned was the locked door in the corridor. All of this happened because they modeled a behavior for the wizard and the skeletons (aggressive toward the player). A number of events occurred which brought everyone together in the same location, and the player was immersed into a fiction that no one even considered.

This is the whole point of what *Looking Glass* has dubbed *Immersive Reality*, a design philosophy that Dan Schmidt, head of the **Terra Nova** team, describes as, "trying to make the [game] world as real as possible, with not just good graphics, but by including a realistic physics model and a lot of things to interact with to give you the feeling that you're really there." The stunning **Flight Unlimited** is their first release to use this philosophy, though its genesis can be found in all of their earlier products.

LookingGlass' Michael Sack further clarifies *Immersive Reality* by describing it like this: "It is about using the processor power of the machines to open up worlds that you can interact and play in. Many games still use the physics model of their first product and just improve the graphics in later versions. Is that really enough of an

'S TERRA FIRMA

to bring you the scoop on Looking Glass' new simulation

PREVIEW

eight or nine feet tall. You cannot fly, but you do have jump jets that give you a vertical thrust that can be used, with forward motion, to propel you over small chasms or bodies of water. You have a full range of biped motion in the suit, and the CPU computes all limbs, joints, and the forces on them at all times. The game uses no animations for the characters: they are generated on the fly depending on the terrain and your walking speed. The characters will react realistically to their environment, meaning that when climbing up hills they'll slow down and when heading up a steep mountain they could fall over. If you are hit by enemy fire, expect the recoil on your body to be modeled accurately.

Artificial intelligence

With this title, *LookingGlass* is planning to flex their artificial intelligence (AI) muscles, since it's not a "one lone soldier against the world" design. You will need your squad to perform certain tasks on each mission that you will not be able to do, and due to that the squad will have to be made as real as possible, with distinct personalities and talents. The personalities will be defined by the full-motion video cut scenes. While on a mission the team members will act autonomously, so selecting the right members for each mission will be critical. You can control team members and tell them to do things like act as a diversion (use a weapons guy or sniper), jam the enemy communications (high electronics skill), or heal the other members of the team.

The combat AI is getting most of the work at this point in the games development. The starting point for all of the enemy and friendly units is a generic code for a set of basic skills and how to react to certain common situations. The skills everyone will have are things likes finding the enemy, picking out the best places to take cover, and firing their weapons. If there is a mountain or foliage in the way of their target they will figure out the best way

Look at the reflections on the lake - all in real time!

Start your missions here

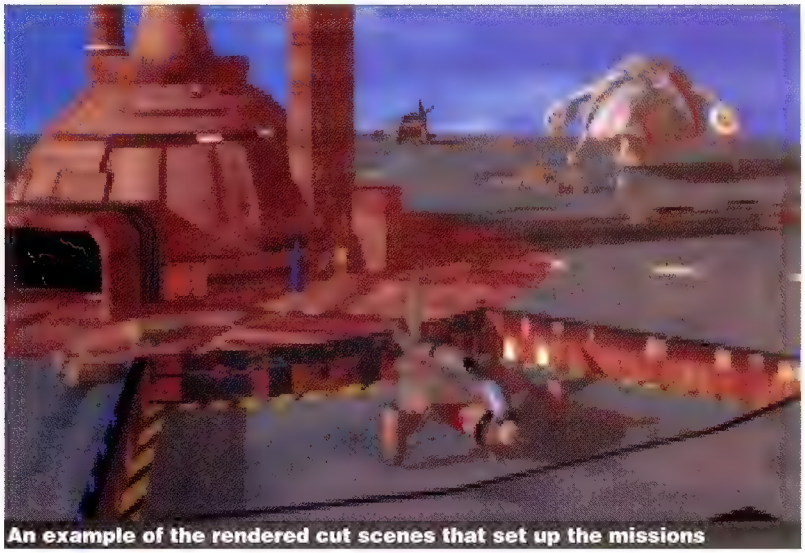
improvement? We are simulating reality. But what is reality? It's interaction with objects, time, and space. The feedback that you receive determines the level of reality."

In order to accomplish their goals of creating truly immersive worlds, *LookingGlass* differs from many other companies in that they design the games first and then create the tools needed to realize that design. This is the way movie special-effect giant *Industrial Light & Magic* creates their special effects. A company approaches them and says, "We want people to fly," and *ILM* figure out a way to do it. Many game companies create a really great technology and then graft a game onto it, which usually results in nifty technology but no gameplay.

System Shock CD-ROM

One thing that you notice, or don't notice, about all of *LookingGlass'* products are all of the subtle details which may only come to light when you find them missing in other products. The point at which *Immersive Reality* is working best is when you notice it the least. Doug Church summed it up by saying, "We want *Immersive Reality* to be seamless, not "click a button and boom, here's the immersion." We are trying to educate the gaming public of the possibilities of a computer product. **System Shock** showed that people are so used to products without interaction that they don't even realize they can look up and down, crouch, peer around corners, and throw things...we're still trying to establish these conventions so that gamers will know what to expect, while at the same time simulating cool things that they don't expect. We're giving you a world that you can play in, you'll have fun, and it all works."

Flight Unlimited


An example of the rendered cut scenes that set up the missions

PREVIEW

around it, following a certain procedure as if it were learned from a battle manual. It will also figure out the best way to get in a position to defend or attack. Don't let the canned AI bits scare you off, as they are being done in such a way that the troops will not become too predictable. It just gives them a beginning game plan, and at some point a more advanced AI will kick in and it will send everyone off on their own. The hope for the AI is that no matter what situation comes up the troops will react realistically.

There are currently 31 missions in the game, plus a random mission builder that will allow you to practice. The missions will be sequential, so there will be no branching storyline as with the **Wing Commander** games. The reason *LookingGlass* is not using a branching story is that they really want the player to be able to see everything in the game, and branching stories force the player to work a lot harder to see every mission. The missions will include a variety of attacking, defensive, reconnaissance, non-combat spying missions, and day and night missions with a dynamic lighting model (you can shoot out lamps for cover).

One of the goals of **Terra Nova** is to introduce players to the tactics of combat without requiring them to even know the terminology. You will be able to use covering fire and flanking maneuvers, but not in such a manner that only wargaming aficionados will understand. Initially teammates will volunteer help, but hopefully, by later missions, you will get the jump on their commands, sending them on these maneuvers without even knowing that you're using them. With three team members per mission, *LookingGlass* has the freedom to create missions that will require certain specialties that only one or two of them could possibly have, requiring teamwork.

Gameplay

Some of the aspects of the game that you can expect to see are multiple varieties of weapons, including various lasers, grenade launchers, and other projectile weapons. Friendly fire will be a great concern for you, especially when the action gets hot and heavy and you're lobbing grenades right and left. You can also choose to target certain body parts of the enemy, though it would seem that it would incredibly hard to do this when they are firing back at you.

One of the really interesting features is your ability to send out spy drones and fly them around enemy locations, which allows you to see the approaching enemy but can also alert them to your presence. If you are injured in battle you have various medical kits and armor regeneration packs at your disposal, which you can micromanage and apply only to certain parts of your armor (for example, protect your legs, unless you want to get trapped without any means of escape–running away should always be an option).

Graphics

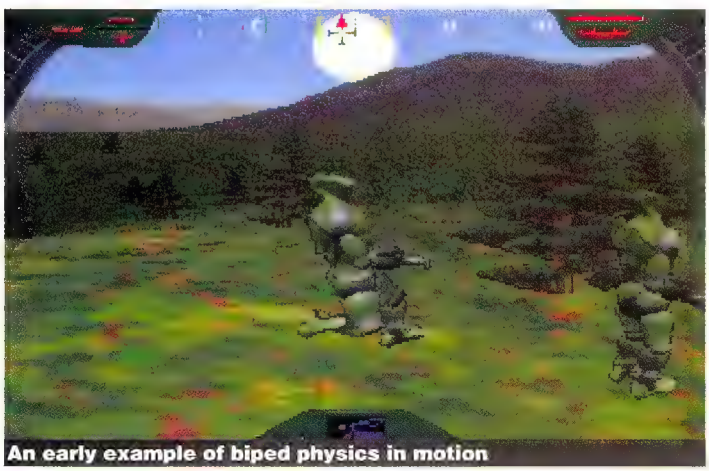
Graphically, the representation of the terrain is, as you can tell from these pictures, excellent. One thing you will notice is that it ups the ante on such respected flight simulators as **Magic Carpet** and **Comanche**. It has the detail in the distance that **Comanche** excelled at yet retains the up-close detail that **Magic Carpet** is known for. You can also view the action from multiple camera angles.

The game will feature four different climates to do battle in, including the normal world, a desert land, an ice world, and a moon. The different climates have an affect on projectile weapons and terrain, while you will have to deal with the different gravitational affects in the moon. They are trying to make the worlds real and different not only through the actual terrain art, but with the physics of the world and how you interact with it.

There are a lot of details that make a big difference in the look of the game. The water is accurately reflective of the surrounding areas, lending a realistic touch to what could otherwise be just another piece of terrain. When you get hit by enemy fire the screen temporarily fills with static, just like in **System Shock**.

One of the biggest design challenges for **Terra Nova** is to integrate the physics of the bipeds, the communication between yourself and your team, and the handling of maps in such a way not to make it feel like the world is switching back and forth. One way they're trying to do this is by taking great pains to put everything on the screen at one, which is something that they did with **System Shock**. The reason for this is that they don't want to pull you out of the game in order to show you map or views of your other squad members. The game uses multiple windows that allows you to view different things at once, all in real-time. You can, for example, fly a spy drone in one window, while looking at the map in one and monitoring a squad member in another. One interesting feature is that your main window, which is usually your view of the action, can be swapped for any other window, allowing you to look at a large map and see your first-person view in a smaller windows.

Mixing genres is a risky business. The folks at *LookingGlass* do not want **Terra Nova** to be a really good action game with an annoying strategy part or a strategy game with weak action. They really want to immerse you in a realistic environment and make you care about your teammates. If they manage to achieve all of the goals and merge all of these disparate parts, **Terra Nova** could be quite the unique gaming experience.❑


An early example of biped physics in motion

Give out assignments without leaving the main screen

BREAKING AWAY FROM THE FLEET

HIGH SEAS Trader

Ever wanted to **sail** into the sunset? Visit **ports** of call known only to grizzled **18th century** sea captains?

Then let our unique **first-person** perspective and stunning **3-D** graphics put the wind in your sails! **Swashbuckle** away as you **trade** goods, vanquish **enemy ships** and create routes to **riches**. Take time to gossip in local **taverns**, repair **cannonball** damage, and stoke up your **crew's** morale. (A little rum, perhaps?)

Chart your progress with our authentic **navigational** aids, and revel in a world long gone: Where **fortunes** are fiercely defended, and only **skill** stands between you and the deep blue sea!

Features:

- Variety of goods to trade and passengers to carry.
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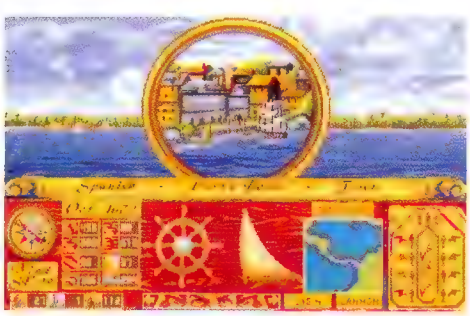
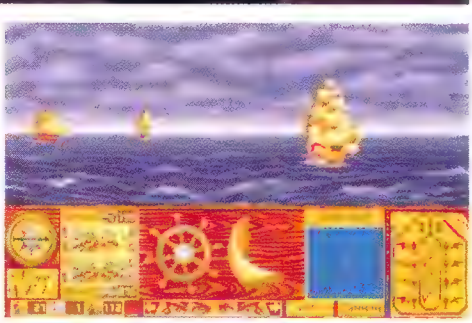
- Buy and enhance ships from several models.
- Highly intuitive interface.
- Dynamic pricing and political models.
- Strong replayability.



Travel the world in search of riches

Visit exotic ports on many continents



Engage enemy ships in realistic sea combat

Impressions

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IBM PC Screenshots may vary

Timothy Brooks gives us an advance look at his new game

DESIGN NOTES

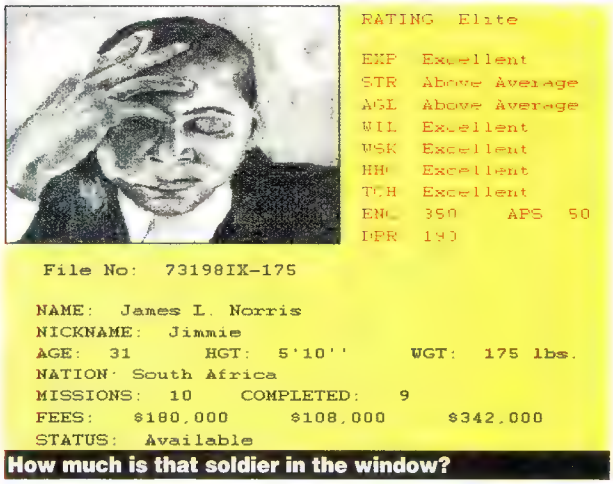
Wages of War (WOW) is a project I started design on in early 1991. For a number of reasons, not the least of which was the startup of *Strategic Gaming Designs* (*SGD*), I had to put **WOW** on the shelf. After completion of *SGD*'s first product, **Nothing But Net! Pro League Basketball**, I immediately dusted off the **WOW** designs and started development. We are now heavily involved in the art work and coding and, if everything goes well, we are looking at a fourth quarter 95 release.

The main concept behind **WOW** is one that has been portrayed in many board games and more recently in computer simulations: a tactical simulation of squad level combat. The similarities end there though, as I also wanted to include secondary concepts which you usually only see in more wide scale strategic simulations. These secondary concepts mainly fall under the heading of logistics (transport, supply and demand, and personnel). Finally I wanted a unique way to "keep score", and to allow the player to be challenged both on and off the battlefield. To this end, I chose to simulate mercenary activities and, to give the game a wider scope, I set the time period in the near future. This allowed me to play with history a bit, so that we could include a larger range of missions and also manipulate resources for weapons and equipment.

Solitaire squad level simulation

The game itself will be a solitaire simulation, pitting the player against computer controlled enemy forces and competing mercenary companies. The AI must be strong in an offering of this type, so we are taking a neural net approach to the enemy AI. In combination with the AI, there are timed events that control the flow of the action. These events are loaded in a random fashion that will allow for a great deal of replayability. Truly, no two games will be exactly alike.

The depth of choices will be an impressive feature of **Wages of War**. The player will be able to choose his squad for each mission from over fifty mercenaries, each rated in over ten abilities. Then the squads will be outfitted from over 60 pieces of weapons and equipment. And if that isn't enough, the game design will allow for additional mercenaries, weapons, equipment, and scenarios. **WOW** will take a realistic look at squad level tactics in a unique and interesting gaming engine.❑

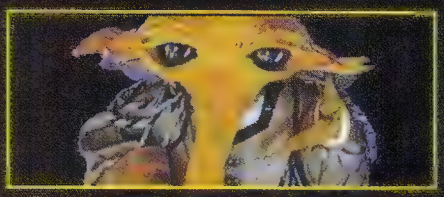


How much is that soldier in the window?

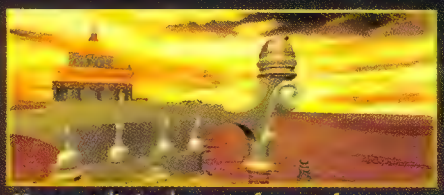
The river wild

Menu please?

Excedrin headache #238



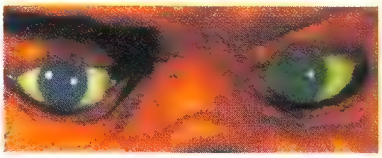
Otherworldly 256 color 3-D graphics



Hyper-realistic planet surfaces and structures

DEAD ALIENS TELL NO TALES

You've just dropped through 1000 miles of gaseous nitro in your exo-rover, in search of a big ugly alien with information to peddle. Unfortunately, you're a little too late...your alien buddy apparently got blasted by someone else!



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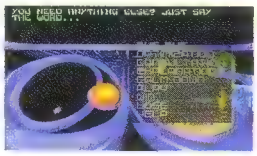

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Reader Service No. 32

Steve Bauman uncovers evil in the new Gabriel Knight adventure

Horror was one genre that hadn't been done to death in the gaming world until the release of **7th Guest**. Now horror games are appearing in droves, with games like **Alone in the Dark 3**, **Phantasmagoria**, **11th Hour**, and **Harvester** appearing in early 1995. One game that will likely be quite different from all of those titles is *Sierra's* sequel to **Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Father,** called **The Beast Within**. Like **Sins of the Father**, it will feature a more cerebral and classic horror style that is more Mary Shelley than Clive Barker.

Sins of the Father has its limitations, but it's still a respectable design. Why? It's pretentious as hell, but how many games are there you can actually make that claim about? It is one of the few games to use imagery and mood to convey a lot of its inner meaning, whereas most games dumb down to their target audience and feature no depth whatsoever. **Sins of the Father** is talky, but features more character development and interaction than most adventure games. It also features a lot of extremes in emotion and is one of the few games that explore the dark side of religion and philosophy. That side of the game is most interesting; let's hope for more explorations of same in **The Beast Within**.

Werewolves and Wagner

The plot of **The Beast Within** finds Gabriel exploring his German ancestry in what was formerly known as Bavaria. As is usually the case when Americans go poking around in foreign lands, he becomes caught up in an adventure, only this one involves werewolves, King Ludwig II, and Richard Wagner (games mentioning Wagner will replace first-person action games as the next hot thing — see the preview of **The Ring Cycle** elsewhere in this issue for further proof).

Since the game is set in Germany, expect a highly detailed and accurate history of the area. The designer of both **Gabriel Knight** games, Jane Jensen, is known for her careful research, and this game will no doubt perpetuate that reputation. You will again control Gabriel, with your secretary Grace being a stronger character in the game and taking a more active role in helping you solve the mystery. You will be able to control them in separate chapters much like you could in **King's Quest VII**. Jensen and her staff spent over five months working on the plot and on a 700 page script, and it will be filmed in *Sierra's* new multimedia studio.

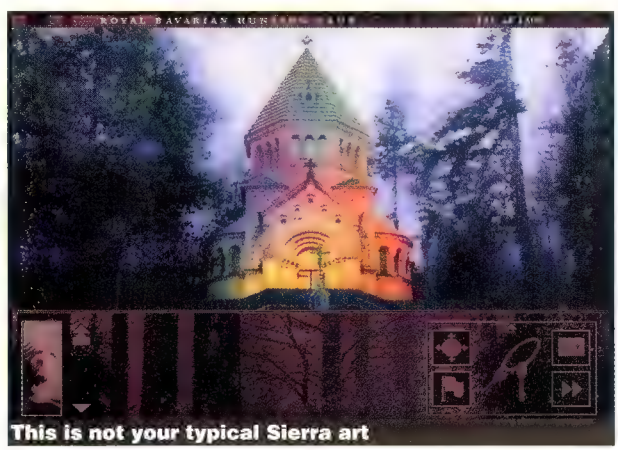
It's got video

The first game uses hand-drawn animated graphics that are quite effective. The new game will use the now-standard digitized actors with computer rendered backgrounds. We will see if this will benefit or distract the gamer from the mood and atmosphere the first game has. The video included with our preview CD wasn't final, but looks quite a bit better than most other games of this ilk (and it was running under Windows™ to boot).

Because they are using filmed actors instead of just voices, Tim Curry, Mark Hamill, and Michael Dorn will not be back this time around. Casting is uncertain at this point, but designer Jensen is opting for actors that actually fit the roles, rather than picking name actors and forcing them to use accents and costumes. This is revolutionary thinking from an industry that seems obsessed with integrating Hollywood at all costs; it can only benefit a game that takes place in Europe.

The Beast Within, like its predecessor, is aimed not only at adults but also at more mature gamers. The game promises to represent werewolves in a more sensual light, much the way Ann Rice has done in her use of the vampyre myth. The story should thus be familiar ground to anyone who knows the actual legends rather than Hollywood's version of them. Those looking for a more classic and subtle form of horror, one that takes the mundane and distorts it, will be certain to find something they like in **The Beast Within**.❑

Note the changes to the game interface



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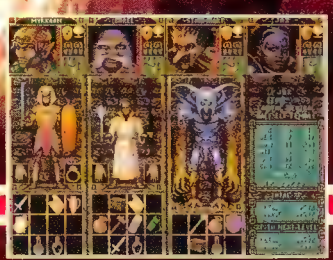

SSI

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THE LAST BLITZKRIEG

SSG takes us back to the Bulge

DESIGN NOTES

The Last Blitzkrieg is a new operational level wargame from *Strategic Studies Group*. It uses a totally new land combat system to recreate the Battle of the Bulge, Hitler's last desperate chance for victory in the West.

The Battle of the Bulge commenced on 16th December 1944, when German troops launched a surprise attack against thinly held sections of the Allied lines in the difficult terrain of the Ardennes. In the savage and confused battles which followed, troops of the 2nd Panzer Division almost reached their objectives on the River Meuse, before Allied counter-attacks and a lack of supplies forced them back.

In designing **TLB**, we were able to start with a totally clean slate. **TLB** owes nothing at all to any previous *SSG* game. There are a number of elements in the design which we think constitute important advances in the science of computer strategy gaming, some of which are described below.

Integrated move and combat structure

Units in **TLB** have two main capabilities. Their Ops Points (OPs) and Attack Capability (AC). Units expend OPs to move, and AC to attack. Most wargames to date have forced the player to assign all attacks during a single game phase, which are then resolved only at the end of that phase. This approach greatly reduces the flexibility of the attacker's options, and places a very significant limitation on play. Our new approach is to integrate movement and combat in the same player turn. This means that while some units attack defenders, others can be waiting to exploit any breakthrough. One huge advantage of this approach is that the attacker does not have to dedicated all his resources at the beginning of a turn, without any subsequent control over the situation when advantages arise as the result of an attack. Of course, breakthrough units don't get a free lunch. Combat in a hex generates a combat residue affecting the combat hex and all adjacent hexes. All units will then have to pay an OP penalty to move through those hexes. OP penalties can also be general, and may be applicable to both sides.

Movement orders

Managing movement is unnecessarily difficult in wargames. In

Some of the units at your command

This is a good example of *SSG's* improved graphics

TLB, you can plot a unit's movement before committing it. Animated arrows on the map show its exact path, along the with OP cost to get to the target hex. Movement paths that take longer than one turn to accomplish will be carried over to the next turn. Most importantly, since a move is implemented when you give the order, a unit will always end up exactly where you wanted it to go.

TLB makes a maximum effort to provide the player with all the information he needs before initiating combat. The Combat Results Table shows all possible outcomes, and every possible factor affecting combat is shown and explained. Units can be clicked on to gain local, detailed information on status.

Of course, the greatest advantage overall of this system is that you get to choose the order of your attacks, and see the results of previous attacks before making a final decision. The OP penalties mean that you can't use this flexibility to get something for nothing.

Supply allocation

The supply system is another problem for many wargames. We have devised a new system which is very simple to use, yet will involve players, especially the German side, in some very tough decisions.

Finally, a *partial list of features* of **The Last Blitzkrieg** includes:

- Magnificent 640 * 480 * 256 color SVGA graphics
- Unprecedented levels of map detail and animation
- Six scenarios, including a full campaign game
- New operational level AI system by Roger Keating and Ian Trout
- Detailed Order of Battle down to regimental level
- Replay feature for reliving battles
- Hidden movement rules
- Full support for Play by E-Mail
- Unique integrated move and fight combat system
- Extensive on-screen help and full tutorial
- Cinematic and informative opening sequence, plus full original soundtrack
- Complete graphics of equipment used during the battle

The Last Blitzkrieg represents a quantum leap for wargame systems. Every element of the system has been designed from scratch in order to make the best possible game. Much more than just a computerized board game, the *SSG* design team have created a game which exploits the capabilities of the computer to provide a design well-suited to the medium in which it will appear.❑

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SIERRA

Reader Service No. 95

PREVIEW

BLUES FOR THE RAINFOREST

Jim Romanoff takes an early trip to SimIsle, the next Software Toy from Maxis

It definitely seems like *Maxis*, the publisher of an ever-growing series of addictive "software toys" is secretly trying to cultivate a society of megalomaniacal computer gamers. First they gave us a city (**SimCity**) to call our own. Build a town, make it desirable, and see who comes to live in it. Then they gave us the whole earth to create (**SimEarth**), a task that few were up to. So then, they gave us a sort of computerized train set (**A-Train**), enticing us to become "railroad tycoons," so to speak.

Along the way, we've also been put in charge of an ant colony, a genetic engineering lab (in both **Sim Life** and **Unnatural Selection**), an aquarium (**El Fish**) and a family-owned farm (**Sim Farm**). In their recent "sim" title, **Sim Tower**, the gamer builds and manages a hi-rise tower, again, creating a desirable environment and seeing who will come inhabit it.

With each new title, the *Maxis* games have given the player increasing doses of control. In **SimTower**, one can actually name and monitor the sims who come to live in the building to see whether they're happy, comfortable, liking the offering of food and movies and so on. *Maxis*' upcoming **SimIsle**, which is currently under development, promises to give us an even greater level of control.

Rainforest Crunch

SimIsle, which is being designed by *Intelligent Games* in the United Kingdom (creators of **Imperium** and the upcoming *Mindscape* title **USS Ticonderoga**), immerses the player in the exotic habitat of a rainforest climate island. It is up to the gamer to develop the island while trying to balance the economy against the environment. In the course of the game, one has to decide whether to focus on protecting the fragile rainforest or developing the land for profit.

The player will be able to choose scenarios which will set them on an island whose ecological and economical states will be at certain levels. Difficulty selection settings will create an environment with more or less economical and natural resources, more being easier to work with. Within the scenarios, events or missions will occur which will challenge the player to deal with several situations at once.

The game will look and feel familiar to anyone who has played **Sim City 2000**. The world — which is presented using a fully light-sourced and texture-mapped 3-D display containing fully animated object bitmaps — can be viewed from two-thirds angle or from a top-down satellite view. There are three levels of magnification available, the closest of which immerses you in a lush and detailed rainforest environment. The intuitive interface allows the player to navigate the island with controls that are very similar to that of **SC2K**.

Another significant component of **SimIsle** will be the use of extensive numbers of video clips. These segments will be used to introduce the various missions as they occur, and will be composed of actual footage that is being obtained by *Maxis* from such sources as the *CNN* news archives.

Agents of change

The development of the island and the handling of the various missions which will arise is accomplished through the use of a force of

The main map view

Simisle uses numerous pop-up windows

agents who are trained and recruited with special skills. All of the agents are shown on a strip (a part of the interface) and can each be selected and sent to various locations to perform certain tasks and in general do your bidding. The player will be able to use agents to do such things as building, negotiating, training locals, gathering technology, responding to disasters and bribing local officials.

Management of the agents and finding the ones with the right skills for each mission will be an integral part of the game. The interface includes a notebook with background information on the agents. Each agent will have particular skills and talents which will be useful in performing certain tasks during the missions. Each time a player chooses a different scenario, the individual agents might have different skills, based on that scenario as well as on the difficulty level selected. As the game progresses and they complete various missions for you, the agents' knowledge and abilities will increase. Eventually within a scenario, the player will discover that certain agents excel at certain tasks and alternately, that some are somewhat unreliable.

Variations on an island

Although the game design is not yet complete, it is likely the player will be able to choose from approximately six different scenarios and islands. As the island is being developed by the group of agents — and depending on the choices that are being made in terms of using the islands economy and ecosystems (or lack thereof) — various events will be triggered. These events will become the basis for missions on which to send your agents and in many ways are the catalyst of the gameplay.

The designers are planning to put at least thirty missions into the initial release of **SimIsle**. As would be expected, many of them will have an environmental focus. In one mission for instance, a tanker, in poor condition to begin with, crashes off shore. Oil begins gushing out of the hull and will damage both the sea and the coastline if not dealt with effectively. Oil and debris will cover the sea and dead animals might begin to wash up on the beach. The player will be able to send agents to the site of the disaster to perhaps repair the boat, put down a containment boom and/or begin the mop-up process. In some cases if the agents do not yet have the necessary knowledge, they can consult with experts. However, this takes time, which might not be available if you have oil dumping into the ocean.

Other environmentally related missions can develop more directly from the choices the player makes while building up the island. As populations increase, larger cities and industry will begin to produce considerable pollution. Sewage, which is one of the more damaging problems, must be dealt with by building effective treatment plants. Doing this will involve considerable knowledge and money.

Industrial developments can easily lead to large scale deforestation which in turn can cause extensive erosion problems leading to further disasters such as mud slides. Other environmental problems might include: over-fishing the waters, radiation leaks, toxic dumping (it might be profitable after all) and so on.

It's the economy, stupid

Some of the missions have a more fiscally related focus. In one case, agents might discover a gold mine (perhaps at a time in the game when the player is in need of some cash). Whatever the yield of this vein might be, mining equipment must be brought in to find out for sure. And of course, there will always be the possibility of a striking local workforce.

The Simisle Development team hard at play

In another scenario the player might be given the opportunity to create a humongous leisure complex with a Disney-like attraction, hotels, restaurants etc. Let's just hope it does better than Euro-Disney.

As with previous sim games, the player will be faced with the powers of nature. Don't be surprised to be confronted with earthquakes, floods and tsunamis. The designers have some other nature-related nightmares in mind, but all that can be said is, be careful swimming at the beaches.

And of course, what would a *Maxis* game be without the possibility of troubles from the cosmos? Don't be surprised if some strange lights are spotted over a range of previously unexplored mountains.

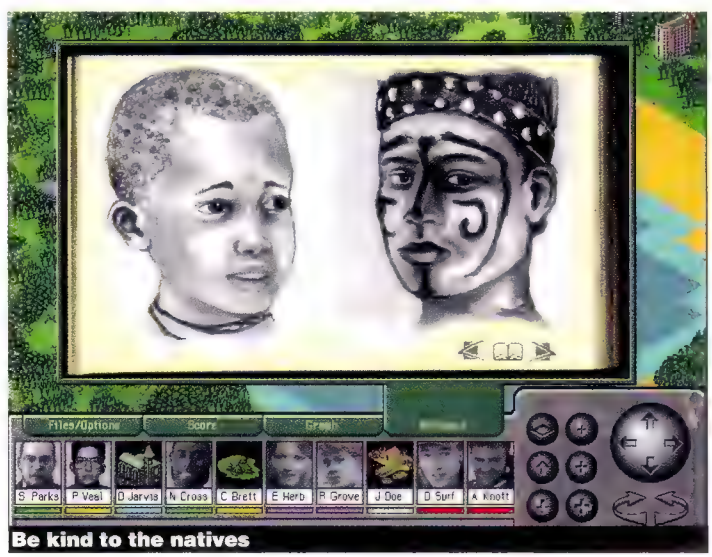
The personal touch

It seems clear from our early look at **SimIsle** that the major development of this game will be the increased control over actual characters. Understanding and managing your team of agents will no doubt be a key to success during play.

The player will be seriously challenged with trying to balance their expanding island-empire with the ever-changing ecological state. All decisions, good or bad, will have visible and lasting effects on the environment and resources of the island. But not to worry, the game isn't likely to end up being preachy. "Our objective is to entertain the player. We're not out to lecture or dictate," says Matthew Stibbe, Managing Director of *Intelligent Games*. "If the player understands a bit more about the interaction between economic development and the ecology after a game, then great!"

Whether you're an environmentalist or a capitalist at heart, or both, one thing that's for sure is that **SimIsle** from *Maxis* will likely provide hours of fascinating gameplay.❑

Pray no oil spills spoil your booming resort



Be kind to the natives

Creation

Steve Wartofsky offers a very early taste

PREVIEW

The designers of the best games in the world (which half the players never play because — dammit! — *Bullfrog* feels players should learn *everything* themselves, and most players refuse to do so) are hot at work on the next game to be developed out of the engine that flew **Magic Carpet**. They're so hot at it, they've decided in fact to make the game an underwater extravaganza, to keep the engine cool while it's running (sorry).

Well, er, take two — **Creation** is all about our collective future. Corporate capitalism, having prevailed, has turned the whole planet to an exhausted cinder (calculate maybe fifteen years from now). The only human survivals are in enclosed city sprawls — if you live, you live like a spider in a jar. The oceans are dead as well (calculate maybe ten years from now; oceans, like deserts, have extremely thin and fragile ecologies, seems counterintuitive but it's true). The whole *Blade Runner* idea turns out to have been *way* too optimistic and cheerful; the future of life on planet Earth has turned out to be very bleak indeed.

Enter *Bullfrog* to save the day; they've left for the stars long ago (Peter's spaceship is almost finished, by last report, but only fits 20 we hear...). They're ready to terraform the nearest non-polluted dead world to make it habitable for *nice* humans (no corporate raiders allowed). Ancient craters on this world are to be filled with fresh new living seas. The seas are to be populated with a marine ecology imported from genetic stores socked away on Earth. All sounds peachy-keen, and the stalwarts who've left their Earthbound shells to accompany *Bullfrog* on its interplanetary eco-savior quest are raring to go.

But wouldn't you know it — the dead world turns out not to be so dead after all (rumors have it that Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford, John D. Rockefeller and Alistair Sim have all been cryogenically preserved and resurrected as Underwater Alien Beings! Naah, turns out that would've taken too much graphics horsepower to animate properly, pleasant idea, though, eh? Maybe in a mission disk), and the new Earth-originated populations suddenly have some Alien-type problems to contend with: a coral-like growth is spreading at the bottom of the crater seas, doing damage to the newly-formed ecosystem.

There's no news on whether this coral-like growth will communicate (and if it does whether the player will have the option of choosing to communicate with it in English, French, Dutch, German, Welsh or Tlingit), but finding some way to deal with it will be one of the issues of **Creation**.

Our guess (it's so early in development anything's possible, by the way, so don't take any of the above as a final committment on the final design!) is that the creeping coral crud will probably enter into contest with the humans over control of the fishies in the bright blue sea, if **Magic Carpet** is any kind of intimation on where the new game will go. Something reasonably sentient will most likely have to arise as the crud's leader, to enter into contests with the player. And so on and so forth.

On the other hand, *Bullfrog* do totally weird and unexpected things almost every time out, so there's really no telling where this thing might go. It *will* be underwater; it *won't* interface with either **Aces of the Deep** or **Seawolf**; and it *will* make advances on an already astonishing 3D engine, perhaps the smoothest and most flexible one out there right now. Graphics on, let's say, a Pentium with a 2MB VRAM PCI or VLB 2.0 (the latter will probably be a faster bus spec, by the way) will be photorealistic, and heaving waves should keep players heaving as well (now might be a good time to get one of those plastic keyboard film covers, with all the heaving 3D on the way). Surface wave effects, surface light sourcing and "sink holes with twisting vortexes" (and little animations of Edgar Allan Poe at the bottom) should all make it (maybe) into the final design (semi-quoting from the developers).

In any event, expect **Creation** to be fun, maddening, almost totally confusing upon boot-up, and difficult to install unless you completely reverse all the training you've undergone in learning how to optimize Base RAM and learn how to optimize Extended RAM instead (as with a number of recent cutting-edge releases). Expect it to be very difficult (here's one reviewer who'd like to go back to the "999 worlds starting off easy and getting very gradually more difficult" mode of **Populous** instead of *Bullfrog*'s current "50 worlds but you'll never get past the first six" approach); expect it to be very involved, and involving. Expect it to be a big surprise. More as we get more.❑

OK, so this is Magic Carpet. It still looks really good, eh?

Imagine this underwater and you'll have a feeling for Creation

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Reader Service No. 97

EXPLORATION

Peter Smith finds satisfaction in Exploration

PREVIEW

When Bill Stealey left *Microprose*, I was eager to see where he turned up next. I expected big things from one of the founders of such an institution in the computer gaming world. Well, *Interactive Magic* is where he turned up, and one of their first games will be **Exploration**. I was fortunate enough to get an early copy to bang on.

Exploration started life as **Christoph Kolumbus**, a game from German software giant *Software 2000*. In the process of migrating it to the states, *IM* is polishing it up, and adding some features.

Stating the obvious

Exploration is (surprise) a game of exploration and empire building. The player begins with a single city and a single ship. From these humble beginnings, a vast domain will be carved out. Either that or the player's country will fade into oblivion. The player is given a choice of various famous explorers representing different countries, but I suspect this is just window dressing.

At the start of the game the world is a dark unknown. Only by sending out ships will the player broaden his or her knowledge, but before setting sail, a ship needs a crew and victuals to keep them going.

Normally about three quarters of the screen is covered by an overhead map of the area surrounding the currently selected unit, with a text box running down the left side offering info on that unit. But in order to hire crew and buy supplies, Homeport is chosen from a drop down menu. Doing so replaces the entire screen with a gorgeous painting of a port city. Running the mouse cursor over the buildings will pop up text indicating their function.

Hitting the right edge of the screen scrolls this painting. In all, the painting/port is three screens wide. Among the businesses one can visit are the shipyard, the trader, the office, the banker, the historian and of course, the pub! This method of using very atmospheric pictures continues into the shops. Click on the trader's shop, for instance, and a scene of him counting his gold amongst all his goods is shown. Running the cursor around the screen yields text revealing what each good is. Clicking on it pops up a text window showing how much the trader has, how much is in your ship, and the cost to buy it. Further clicking will buy parcels of the product. If instead you wish to sell something, clicking on the trader puts the store into buy mode, where the same series of clicks sells product to the trader.

Hoist the anchor and set the mainsail!

But back to the ship. Now that there is a crew in place, and the crew has food and water, it is time to set sail to explore. Movement is either one space at a time by right clicking, or a longer distance by selecting Move from a drop down menu and left clicking. Using this latter method the ship will autopilot, stopping if it moves adjacent to land or another ship.

Once land is found, an expedition can be put ashore to search for native cities. Thus far it seems that the only way to establish a colony is by placing it on an already existing native city. (Time for idle speculation on the political correctness of the game again.

This screen shows the various products to produce, buy and sell.

The golden city has been reduced to a shanty town.

Perhaps this is one of the changes that *IM* is looking into.) Again, setting ashore an expedition is simplicity in itself. Select Form Expedition from a drop down menu and a listing of everything on the ship pops up, with quantities in both ship and expedition columns. Click on the expedition column to move men, food, water to the expedition, then on OK and finally on an adjacent land hex, and an expedition is born.

An expedition moves across land just as a ship moves on the sea (with the added complication of terrain effects). Natives attack from time to time, and in my experience thus far they wipe out all or part of an expedition without any interaction from the player. Assuming the expedition doesn't run afoul of natives, if it finds a city, the player can attempt to establish a new colony. If the expedition is carrying Trinkets (a commodity sold by the Trader back home) the leader of the native city might be bribed into welcoming the expedition with open arms. Otherwise, conquest is possible. The benefit of the former is that the player gains a colony full of residents, whereas conquest wipes out the native population.

A colony has to be grown and nurtured for a while. By sailing back to the home port, gold and settlers can be taken on board for delivery to the colony. (Actually surplus crew is taken on board, and they become the settlers, which seemed a bit odd to me. Hoary old seadogs don't strike me as the perfect folk to settle down to farming.) Once the settlers and gold are delivered to the colony, additional capabilities can be built.

Warehouses add to the amount of goods to be stocked. A church, I assume, either helps the colony grow or makes the settlers happier. But wealth is what we're after, eh? There is a range of business opportunities, from sugar plantations to gold mines. The more potential gold to be produced by a business, the higher the startup costs. Of course, these businesses produce goods, not gold doubloons. The goods must be loaded on board a ship and sailed back to the homeport to be sold to the trader. My hope is that there will be some way to automate this as one's empire grows and micromanaging the pickup and delivery of goods to many different colonies begins to grow tedious. A colony can also be fortified, or built up into a port, though at this time it is unclear to me exactly what benefits these additions provide.

Of course you realize this means war

Once the gold is flowing, more ships can be built and sent out for further exploration. Gold can be invested in research into new ships and weapons. Weapons? Of course! Ships can be outfitted with cannons, mercenaries can be hired, and mayhem will ensue. There are one to three other players in the game, and at some point the world won't be big enough for all of them.

Combat is rather abstract. Ship to ship combat is accomplished by moving onto an enemy ship. Victory results in the choice of taking control of the enemy ship or scuttling it. Defeat results in the immediate loss of the vessel and everything on it. Land combat is handled in a similar fashion, and naval units can also attack port cities and settlements. Combat to me was, if not an actual weak point in the design of the game, not something that sparked much interest in me. Again my hopes are that *IM* will spruce this aspect of the game up.

There is a lot of detail that I'm glossing over, mostly due to not having documentation at this point. For instance, some sugar plantations produced four tons of sugar a year, while others produced as much as fourteen tons. Whether this was a result of location, worker happiness, or sheer luck I do not know.

The church figures into the game, as it should for the time period covered. I was excommunicated once, but whether it was because of my shabby treatment of natives, my resistance to building costly churches in my colonies, or for some other reason, I don't know. Nor am I sure what effect it had on me.

Here's the bottom line. I started dinking around with **Exploration** one afternoon, not expecting to start looking at it seriously yet, and the next thing I know, it's 2:00 A.M. To me, that's the acid test of a great game. I'm looking forward to discovering what *IM* is going to add, as well as learning the subtleties that have evaded me due to a lack of documentation. I cannot imagine **Exploration** being anything but a solid hit. Granted it isn't overly original, but where it imitates it imitates some very popular games. Watch for it.❑

Not just a pretty face -- the interface to city functions.

The trader will sell you food and water and buy goods from you.

An expedition approaches a native city while the ship waits nearby.

THE RING CYCLE

Steve Bauman consults his dictionary of mythology to preview Psygnosis' upcoming game

PREVIEW

The world of myths should provide fertile ground for adventure or role-playing games. However, most games have instead attempted to create their own mythology, probably because they fear scaring off players who may not really understand the myths they are trying to represent. **Wrath of the Gods** was a tongue-in-cheek look at Greek myth, but the last serious adventure/CRPG that was based on Homer was quite possibly **The Return of Heracles**, which was released sometime in the early Reagan years on the Atari 800 and the Commodore 64 (and was a mighty fine game itself).

Psygnosis' upcoming **The Ring Cycle** is a planned three-part adventure that will allow you to take an active role in the Norse mythology that was the basis of Wagner's epic opera (which was of course best performed by one Elmer Fudd and Bugs Bunny — "kill the wabbit" indeed). Part 1 is subtitled "Sigmund and the Wergild," Part 2 is "Sigurd and the Dragon Ring," and Part 3 is "Twilight."

Soap opera

The first part of **The Ring Cycle** recounts the soap opera saga of the Volsung. You control Sigmund, one of the ten sons of Volsung. It turns out that your sister Signy is marrying Siggeir, King of the Goths, but secretly she despises him. At the wedding feast Odin, great-grandfather of Volsung and general God-like being, thrusts his sword up to its hilt into the Branstock (a huge oak tree). He foretells that the warrior who pulls out the sword is destined to keep it and that the divine sword would guarantee victory to its owner.

Siggeir, being the cowardly bad-guy type, was very upset to find that you, the wimpy Sigmund, are the only person who is able to remove the sword. After failing to buy it from you, Siggeir decides that in order to get the sword he must kill Volsung and all of his sons, you included. After offing Volsung he ties you all up in the forest so that a creature can have them for lunch, one per day, but you manage to escape death and retreat to the forest to become a smith. Unfortunately, Siggeir captures the sword.

The game starts at this point, and it will be up to you to avenge the death of your Father by defeating Siggeir in battle, thereby securing the throne for your sister Signy. In order to do that you will need the assistance of Signy's son Sinfiotli, who will only be allowed to help you if you slay the beast that killed your brothers. Of course Sinfiotli is also your son, the result of an incestuous encounter with your sister (yikes!). Break out the score card to keep track of who's related and/or sleeping with whom. I've always felt that all good games should have some incest and violence to really spice up the plots.

The game

The Ring Cycle will use a first-person perspective and will allow you to travel through nine different regions and countries separated by four types of barriers: water, mountain, forest, and marsh. You can fly through the air on a dragon or tromp through the swamps. The gameworld promises to be very large, and you will be able to travel to and from Gothland, Hunaland, the Western Isles, Hunderny, Gniteaheid, the Rhinewater, the Elfmarc, the Niblund, and Lymdale. In true adventure/CRPG fashion, you must journey through these regions accomplishing various deeds and obtaining items that will assist you in completing the game.

At some point upon completing **The Ring Cycle** you will have defeated Siggeir to avenge your family, dealt with Andvari, who is a nasty dwarf who guards the treasure of the Nibelungs, dealt with the cursed ring Andvari possesses and cast him into the Rhine (which liberates Nibelung and removes the threat of enslavement of the Gods by Andvari). I'm tired already. After all of this, you'll probably be forced to sleep with your mother and be slain by your son. All in a day's work for a mighty mythological adventurer.

A few years ago a game came out called **Dusk of the Gods**, which was based on the Norse myths of Ragnarok and Valhalla. That game was more interesting than playable, as it became nearly impossible to track all of the various relations and information that you had to amass during the course of the game. This is the fundamental problem with mythology (ask anyone who's taken it in school) and one that any myth-based game somehow has to try to overcome. Hopefully the designers of **The Ring Cycle** will take this into account and allow for an entertaining game that doesn't require a degree in mythology to complete.❑

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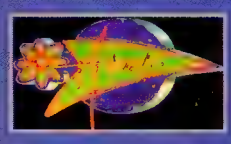

The Avalon Hill Game Company
4517 Harford Road ★ Baltimore, Maryland 21214

Stalingrad can be found in computer game stores near you. For order information, or for the name of a retailer near you, call Toll Free: 800-999-3222; ask for Dept. SP 1.

SPACED OUT AGAIN

Steve Bauman hallucinates a preview of Space Quest VI

PREVIEW

Roger Wilco is beginning to show more stamina than Rocky in this, his fifth sequel from *Sierra*. He's visited interstellar McDonalds', traveled in time, and scrubbed the decks of spaceships throughout the galaxy. His latest adventure, creatively known as **Space Quest VI**, finds our bungling space-janitor/world-saving hero engaging in a battle of wits with a loaf of bread and pulling off the upset victory.

Well, that's not really the plot of the game. Little is known about the real plot (it's a fiercely guarded secret at *Sierra* headquarters), but what we've seen seems to mostly be a parody of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, with jabs at other science fiction movies thrown in for good measure. How it plays to people who aren't intimately familiar with *Star Trek* remains to be seen.

Homeric Plot

The start of the game finds Roger's latest ship being attacked by a race of aliens known as the Bjorns (no, they're not a group of gangly Swedes, but a parody of the Borgs), who have the indignity of featuring common household appliances on their heads (and they do look better then the bad guys with toaster heads in **The Fortress of Dr. Radiaki**). Those devious fools have managed to turn the entire crew of Roger's ship into lemon sorbet (which is probably better than being turned into ice milk), and it's up to Roger to save his crew, his ship, humanity, and whatever else might be worth saving.

The game will use the typical *Sierra* point and click interface and promises to be a bit more puzzle-based then some of the coming adventures (such as **Phantasmagoria**). Like all recent *Sierra* releases, **Space Quest VI** will feature crisp high-resolution SVGA artwork. Gone are the somewhat fuzzy backgrounds of **Space Quest IV** and **V**, replaced with a leaner, meaner, and cleaner style that allows the artists to stretch their imaginations and really skewer some rather obvious targets. It will also feature a number of incredibly impressive rendered *Silicon Graphics* cut scenes that will rival those found in **Outpost** in quality.

Lowbrow Fun

It will feature the usual complement of sight-gags, puns, and outrageous antics that the series has been (in)famous for, but the real question is whether it will include some of the more sophisticated humor that we've seen in other competitors products. The **Leisure Suit Larry** series of games rule the lowbrow end of humor (which for fans of the series is right where they want it to be), so one would hope that **Space Quest** may take the high road and attempt to be a little smarter with their humor (a la *LucasArts'* **Sam & Max**). But then again, many of the fans of **Space Quest** find the punny-style to be their cup o' tea.

Sierra, like most companies, are able to produce the most technically sophisticated games, ones that could barely have been imagined when the first **Space Quest** was released in the late 80's. However, will that technology make **Space Quest VI** a better game then those earlier installments? All of the early indications of this game show it to be of higher quality than the last couple of installments of the series, but we'll have to wait until the game is released to see if it is able to give the gamer an overall better gaming experience, one that is able to transcend the aural & visual improvements. Regardless, if the sight of an Enterprise-style spaceship shaped like a giant jock-strap is your idea of gut-splitting humor then **Space Quest VI** will likely be right up your alley.❑

How do I become a parking attendant here?

Where do you insert the quarter?

Roger Wilco's organized living quarters

is the first in a new series from **TPW** involves eight different embodies the actual units, specific landing sites, on tactical level operations of airborne warfare ight scenarios include **Arnhem, Maleme, Syracuse, and the *what if* scenario Folkestone**, the Germany's plan to invade England). Each scenario is succinctly the code name, date, and a map of the operation **TPW** embodies the real feel and challenge of airborne as opposed to just a Tactical Wargame.

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COMMAND POST

When darkness falls

The military term commonly referred to as "fog of war," has for some time now been bantered about both in computer wargaming and strategy based development circles. Simply stated, fog of war represents the level of uncertainty a battlefield commander must come to grips with, based upon certain vagaries and/or the limited amount of reliable intelligence he may have at his disposal. For instance, at the Battle of Waterloo, Marshal Ney guessed incorrectly that Wellington was retiring from the battlefield because he could see a portion of the Ango-Allied armies were marching to the rear. In fact, they were merely falling back several hundred paces in favor of the hill's rearward slope and therefore were no longer within view. Ney simply could not have known given the battlefield conditions and the degree to which he could assimilate reliable information.

Similarly, many of the top German military leaders of World War II expected a cross channel invasion to occur at Pas de Calais rather than the more distant beaches at Normandy. Due to several cunning Allied deceptions, improper weather forecasting and the lackluster performance of the Abwehr, the German military intelligence arm, the Wehrmacht was caught in a desparate struggle from the outset. Of course still other mitigating circumstances were notoriously factored into the equation, but most importantly Festung Europa fell victim to the fog of war.

Today we obviously know better, hindsight as they say sporting 20/20 vision. Still, even by today's "information at the touch of a button" standards, we're still living in a world ravaged by inconceivable mistakes due to the effects fog of war. Witness the shootdowns of the KAL flight over the Soviet Union, the Iranian Airbus over the Persian Gulf and the two Blackhawk helicopters over northern Iraq as prime examples.

As computer wargames, and for that matter, strategy games go, efforts have long been underway concerning the replication of various aspects of mapboard fog of war, but for the most part, the results we've thus far witnessed have been rudimentary at best. Most designs have opted for the rather archaic flashlight approach, wherein the typical mapboard is veiled in darkness and is then revealed as each unit encroaches into the uncertain void. Games such as the widely popular **Civilization**, **Colonization** and **Global Conquest** from *MicroProse*, **Empire Deluxe** from *New World Computing* and **Warcraft** from *Blizzard Entertainment* all utilize this approach. Others, like *New World's* **Hammer of the Gods** and *QQP's* **Merchant Prince**, have prefered design techniques which utilize sepia tones to convey certain limited knowledge regarding the unknown.

Unfortunately, most designs have produced similarly dismal results once the map has been revealed. Typically, once a region has been discovered, the terrain tends to stay highlighted for the remainder of the game. In a game like **Warcraft**, for instance, the players can actually see the transit of enemy units as they move into unmasked terrain, even if no friendly units are in the vicinity to spot them. In effect, many times the game boils down to a foot race of intelligence gathering determined by who is best able to reveal more terrain in the most expeditious manner.

A better approach addressing mapboard fog of war can be found in *Blue Byte/Accolade's* **Battle Isle 2200** (**BI2200**). Like **Merchant Prince**, a limited amount of initial intelligence is available regarding the world map respective of a friendly unit's spotting range. As before, once a unit embarks on a trek through the masked terrain the map is peeled back according to the spotting capabilities of the specific unit in question. Unlike other strategy games though, once units meander away from discovered territories, the map slowly fades back into shadowy uncertainty. As a result, not only does this technique keep a player guessing regarding unit deployments on both sides, but in so doing forces a player to constantly reevaluate previously detected terrain for signs of change, much like a real world commander would be required to perform.

Although the beauty of the **BI2200** mapping system still places a premium on ascertaining and documenting map-related information, the underriding game does not fundamentally breakdown, whereby a race is unfortunately established rewarding those players who can chart the map in the fastest and, perhaps more importantly, the most economical fashion. Strategy is stressed but not at such an exorbitant cost that players are developing techniques to explore the map first and asking questions regarding the interpretation of the raw data second. Instead, as they explore the map, players are forced to constantly examine and assess how the map, as they currently understand it, fits into their turn by turn game plan.

This is the essence of what wargaming and even map based strategy gaming is, or rather should be, all about. Just as a player would make

Figure 1: Leave the nightlight on in Warcraft: Orcs and Humans. An otherwise excellent game, the key to victory, though, is lifting the fog of war instead of promoting it.

Top Five Strategy Games

1. Master of Orion
2. Warcraft: Orcs and Humans
3. Warlords 2
4. X-COM
5. Colonization

Top Five Wargames

1. Panzer General
2. The World at War: Stalingrad
3. Wargame Construction Set #2: Tanks
4. Clash of Steel
5. The World at War: Operation Crusader

turn by turn appraisals of the enemy's forces, turn by turn evaluations of the mapboard need to be interwoven into the brainstorming process. Perhaps a crested river has subsided, the surrounding flooded countryside finally being permitted to dry out. Conversely, maybe a dam has burst and washed away the nearby town. The world is constantly changing, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. For a player to appreciate this, game designers have to dispense with the notion that the typical mapboard needs only to be explored once and then neatly filed away. Our environment is a dynamic, learning experience. Let's try to reflect this more accurately in our gaming models.

What price glory?

Several months back, *Strategy Plus* commented on certain economically-driven design decisions made about *MicroProse*'s upcoming tank product, **Across the Rhine** (**AtR**). At the time, apparently for purely economic reasons, the company had decided to omit the *Waffen SS* formations from the World War II game due to the problems it would create trying to market the game in Germany. Since World War II, the German government has heavily restricted anything remotely connected symbolically with the former Nazi regime, due to realistic concerns about the potential revival of neo-Nazi right-wing extremist politics in the country. Disavowing the horrors of the past has been much more difficult than is generally understood outside Germany.

After much online discussion over their decision to exclude such symbology in **AtR**, *MicroProse* has decided to be as responsive as possible to their American audience, and have done their best to provide some options to represent the SS in ways that are more historically accurate in the game. While players will not be able to run a full campaign from the SS perspective with the initial release, American led forces *will* run into various SS units from time to time, and players will be able to command SS units courtesy of the scenario builder that will be included. Down the road, an expansion pack is still planned (likely to be marketed outside of Germany), which will follow the exploits of the 1st SS *Leibstandarte*, 2nd SS *Das Reich* and 12th SS *Hitler Jugend* Divisions.

And what of things to come? Jim Day, the producer on the World War II tank simulation series, has already indicated that **Across the Desert** should ship by Xmas 95 and will cover the North African campaign from its inception in early 1941 to the fall of El Agheila. While he'd love to develop an eastern front version of the game encompassing armored actions in the Soviet Union (where would the series be without the battles of Kursk, Smolensk and Kharkov?), the overriding factor governing the go ahead decision will obviously be the success or failure of the first two releases in the series. Look for future coverage in our simulations section.

Speaking of responsive decisions, *Sierra* continues to assert that they *are* developing a patch for **Outpost** which addresses some of the design failings made so painfully obvious several months back. Available free of charge around late December/early January, registered users will be able to download the patch from most of the major BBS's and/or order it from *Sierra* direct.❑

Figure 3: Now you see it, now you don't. The prison complex of Battle Isle 2: Titan's Legacy disappears from view when the radar vehicle bites the bullet.

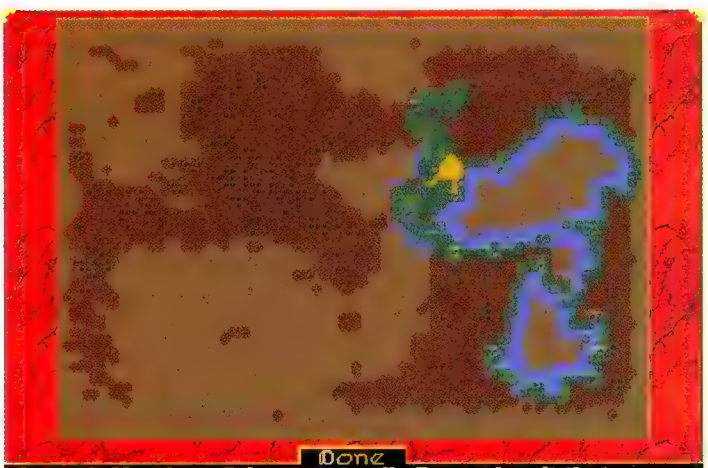


Figure 2: Merchant Prince sets sail. Rumor has it that *MicroProse* will be rereleasing this former *QQP* title as Machiavelli: The Prince.

Figure 4: Across the Rhine. *MicroProse* learned you can't spell "Across" without the SS.

Reed Brozen offers more advice for the rebels

HINTS & TIPS

Are you hooked, or what? By now I hope that you have at least completed your first game, win or lose. If you are already smashing the computer AI on the hardest settings then do not bother with reading this article. However, if you do not have a "colonization score" that gives you 100% then you might find a bit of advice that you can use. You must remember at all times that your main goal is to win the revolution and max out your score; all of your actions must lead to this end.

Maximizing production, or the colonist shuffle

This is one of those nit-picky little points but you really do not want to waste precious production time. If you run out of lumber for building, don't let your carpenters sit on their duffs. Set them to work on something else as fast as you can. It's not a problem to build things in stages if that is necessary. First, gather the lumber; then make the hammers. If the building requires tools, the next steps are mining ore and making the tools. Especially in the small colonies, you can thus build things a step at a time. The same goes once you have towns specialized in manufacturing. You need to balance your production of coats, cloth, rum, and cigars, so keep those colonists shuffling. When you run out of tobacco do not let your tobacconist sit idle; make him work on something else while you wait for the next wagon train to arrive.

City specialization

Waste not want not. Do not waste your resources building everything in each city. If you're wondering what to build next, build artillery. Eventually all of your cities will be devoted to this, an honorable wartime activity. In the mean time, specialization is the key. One city should have an Ironworks; that is where you should send your first three master blacksmiths. Another city should have the Arsenal for musket production and as soon as they are available you should put three master gunsmiths to work there. Try to build your one Custom house in the same city that has upgraded production like the Cigar factory, Textile mill, Rum factory, and Fur factory.

Lumber production can be centered in one city with some expert lumberjacks on timber symbols producing more than 30 each a turn. However, lumberjacks along with carpenters are often best used by equally distributing them between your cities. Place one to three carpenters in each mega-city and one expert lumberjack. As you clear most of the forests for plowing to increase food production, you will build up lumber surplus. Any extra lumber that you need can be brought in by wagon train from a city that has extra emphasis on lumber production.

Ore is another natural commodity that is sacred because it makes tools for muskets, artillery, and building. This means you need a lot. Specialization is again the way to go because the best ore-gathering sites are the mountains. You should have one or more cities appropriately situated for mining. This is where you should send all of your expert ore miners.

Horses and horse sense are the last two specialty areas. One city should simply max out food production, which increases horse breeding speed. You will also need to build large warehouses because the more horses there are, the faster they multiply. As you fill the stables, send off only one hundred at a time to other towns so you can keep production high. To give your population horse sense you will need at least one University town. Maybe even two would be good because you really need expert farmers to maximize your city populations and veteran soldiers to wage war. You may want to make brief forays to educate miners or lumberjacks, or whatever experts you seem to need. Sometimes it is even worth clearing the specialty of some colonists to send them as free colonists to a University where they can be reeducated.

Try and specialize in one resource in each town

Jamestown at the Mississippi delta?

The legendary island of Boston

These islands hold the perfect supply towns

April 15, taxes

There are really only two possible policies to adopt on taxes. The first choice is to just keep kissing the pinky ring. This will cause your taxes to go up and for the King's expeditionary force to grow. However, you will still be able to trade in any commodity and you will not lose a few hundred supplies of something. Or, you can throw away the supplies that you worked so hard to save. You will also make trade difficult and poor. This plan will keep your taxes low and if you can manage to trade other commodities you will make more money. Then when you have built up a large surplus of the untradable goods you have Jakob Fugger join your continental congress and all of the trade restrictions will be reversed. Paying the outrageously high back taxes is a really stupid option.

Sailing the high seas

Shipping and naval power are an important aspect of the game. They play a key role only before you declare independence. The cargo ships are basically a waste and I recommend that you do not spend time or money on them. The only one that you should use is the first one that you are given at the start. When you do have money for ships you should build Privateers and Frigates. If Francis Drake has joined your continental congress, the strength of Privateers is increased 50% and these ships can then be fast, deadly and inexpensive.

There are several roles that ships must play. First, you need to keep several ships going to and from Europe in order to pick up any new colonists and bring any trade items to sell at market. One privateer, a particularly fast ship, should be used for exploration. This vessel should carry at least a scout and possibly even a dragoon. The rest of the privateers should be out hunting. A cargo of two hundred muskets is worth a lot and it hinders the competition. Frigates give you more power and if your sea battles seem profitable a few may be worth it, but do not spend too much on them. Once you declare independence ships are nearly useless. You will get all your man-of-war ships free from your allies.

A brief note on city types

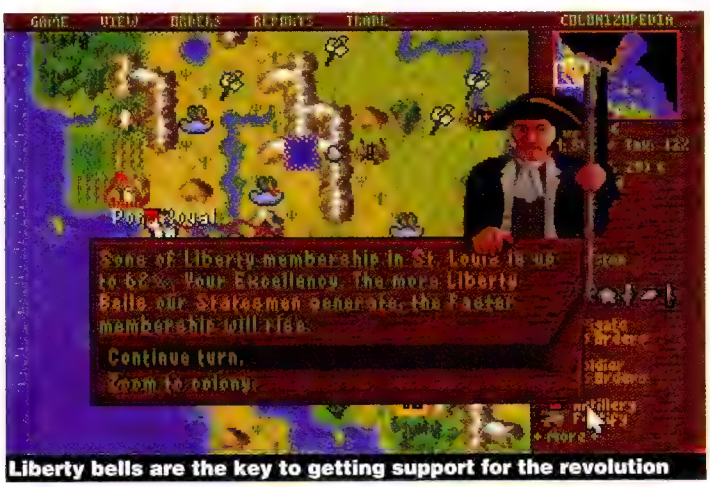
You should categorize your cities into one of only a few groups. First is the mega city of which you will want about six. These are the ones that are specialized and must be extremely well defended. Well defended means fortress level and at least five pieces of artillery. Then there are the supply or feeder cities. These are small and you never build them up so that you can eventually abandon them without feeling bad. Their key use is to supply raw materials like cotton or tobacco farming. The last kind is the true temporary city where you build no wall so that you can loot and leave. These may be cities that you have captured or that you make on small islands. When you abandon these cities you can make the colonists leave as pioneers to take the tools with them or as soldiers and dragoons to take the muskets and horses with them. Never forget that you must have a least one port colony.

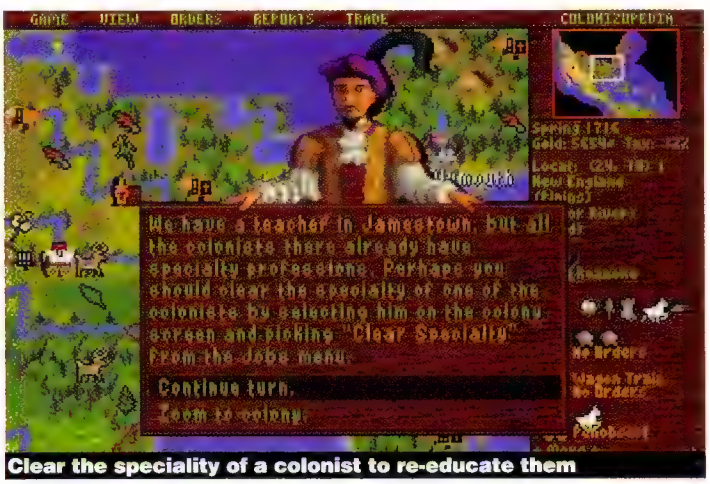
Where should you spend your cash?

So you keep bringing all this junk back to Europe to sell. What really ticks you off are the taxes that the King charges you. All of a sudden you find that you have 3000-4000 gold pieces in your treasury. At first the two most important things to purchase are ships (see what type above) and recruits if there are not enough already on the docks to fill the available holds. Once you have so many ships that it is a bother to move them all around, you should start stockpiling your money. This way you will have enough to buy mercenaries, purchase a few extra artillery pieces and train a few soldiers right before the war starts. Keep the free colonists coming over, as fast as you can. These are the dudes that want to take advantage of the new American education system, so just march them right over to Universityville. Whatever you do, do not waste your money on back taxes or buying trade goods unless you just can not help it. You may also want to purchase just ten of something that the Indians have requested. The whole one hundred is a waste since ten seems to work just as well to lower their alarm levels.

That about sums it up for now; there's still plenty more to think about in this excellent, deep game!❑

HINTS & TIPS


GAME VIEW ORDERS REPORTS TRADE COLONIZOPEDIA
Port Royal
Sons of Liberty membership in St. Louis is up to 62%. Your Excellency. The more Liberty Bells our Statesmen generate, the faster membership will rise.
Continue turn.
Zoom to colony.
Liberty bells are the key to getting support for the revolution


GAME VIEW ORDERS REPORTS TRADE COLONIZOPEDIA
We have a teacher in Jamestown, but all the colonists there already have specialty professions. Perhaps you should clear the specialty of one of the colonists by selecting him on the colony screen and picking "Clear Specialty" from the Jobs menu.
Continue turn.
Zoom to colony.
Clear the speciality of a colonist to re-educate them

REVIEW

BATTLE ISLE 2

As wargames go, there's basically two schools of thought driving today's market. First, there's the traditionalist approach which recreates some particular battle, campaign or war taken straight from the pages of mankind's history books. This particular segment of wargaming has been dominated by American firms for a number of years and doesn't appear to wane anytime soon. Secondly, there's the non-conformist approach which utilizes either a near-term, futuristic scenario, or a fantasy or science fiction based premise to serve as the game's underlying backdrop. In the latter case, non-American firms seem to have produced some of the most notable designs of late. Perhaps the reasons for this phenomena has little to do with programming capability and more with a nation's repeated loss of life from centuries of war. A singularly unproven postulate nonetheless.

Figure 1: A new unit falls in for role call

The prision complex awaiting their latest guest

The troops in all their ray-traced grandeur

Take the scenic route

Although the game is surreptitiously billed as a "scenery CD," **Battle Isle 2: Titan's Legacy** has both feet firmly planted in the realm of expansion pack software, having little to do with planting new apple orchards. Our central protagonist is back in the hot seat, seemingly several decades since we last laid eyes on him, and unbelievable as it sounds, nary a stitch of wear and tear to show for it. Isn't sci-fi grand?

Fresh as a daisy, Val has been accused of high treason by the new ruling council presiding over the Drullian populace. His former allies against the robotic clutches of Titan-Net have, one by one, been removed from power by a treacherous bunch of scheming nogoodniks. Fearing a far different hot seat this go round, Val is instead spared a warrior's ultimate fate. Instead, he is handed a one way ticket to the island prison of Trokort, banished for all eternity to dig aldinium for the ungrateful governing clique.

Fear not, for a few loyalists come to his rescue and thus the story unfolds. Scenario by hard fought scenario, Val once again must reassert himself as the master of disaster thereby regaining his rightful place on the high council.

Those of you familiar with either **BI2** or **BI2200**'s mechanics will have no problems jumping into **Titan's Legacy** since the very same kludgy interface is back. Fortunately nothing else has changed, so those of you who enjoyed **BI2**'s movement/combat system are in for more of the same hexagon hopping. The game includes 6 new units, 16 new scenarios, 10 new multi-player maps and finally true, interactive, multi-player support.

Blue Byte has even optimized the code, purportedly claiming overall speed improvements in the neighborhood of 35%. While I did notice that the game seemed a tad faster and the AI seemed a bit stronger, from time to time I also fell victim to some of the same sluggishness I had witnessed in the original game. A cold reboot seemed the only remedy.

They're baaack

While the game provides for the addition of a few new units, the obligatory new campaign, and the more important addition of true multiplayer capabilities, I steadfastly enjoyed this game over some of the latest traditionalist wargames. The **BI2** concept subscribes to the non-conformist approach of wargame design I alluded to earlier, while seamlessly incorporating some of the best aspects of current software and hardware developments. As a result, the game ably surfaces with a much more compelling concept than the more mundane traditionalist approach to wargaming. In the latter case, wargamers have a fair idea concerning the do's and don'ts surrounding the achievement of victory because they have at their disposal reams of historical documentation to support their decisions. Finally, beyond the introduction of yards of combat footage or dry historical commentary, little other impromptu gaming conventions have been attempted. **BI2**'s approach, utilizing ray traced graphics and oblique camera angles, is both fresh and innovative.

While the premise of **BI2** is still a tad lame, I'm still pretty happy to peck out the "BI2.bat" executable every now and again and dabble in the wargaming unknown.❑

Marc Dultz

Designed by: Blue Byte Software
Published by: Blue Byte Software
Systems: IBM PC
Requirements: Battle Isle 2 or Battle Isle 2200, CD-ROM, DOS 5.0 or above, 386 or better, 560K low memory, 4MB RAM, 6 MB hard disk space
Sound Support: Adlib, Soundblaster, Roland sound cards
Players: One to Five Players

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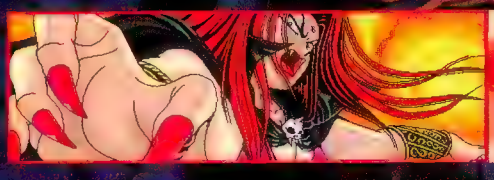
KNIGHTS of XENTAR



HOT ACTION

Reader Service No. 48

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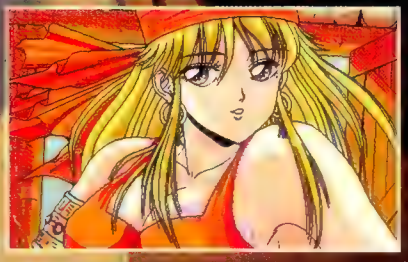

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System : IBM compatible, CD-ROM or diskette version available. Requires a 386-SX (486 recommended), VGA graphics, conventional memory only, sound...

MEGATECH

NR 13

WARNING!!!

NOT RECOMMENDED FOR PLAYERS UNDER 13

STUDY WAR,

Marc Dultz details Blizzard's Warcraft: Orcs and Humans

Games with real time aspects have often proved the most harrowing to master. Typically, not only is the average player confronted by a myriad of options (which, in turn, influences his or her overall strategic and tactical considerations), but the inclusion of constant pressure, requiring time-limited decision making, further magnifies each individual success and failure. Within the context of *Blizzard's* **Warcraft: Orcs & Humans** (**W:OH**), details such as erecting the first barracks or surveying the map to uncover the first gold mines take on even greater significance since as the age-old saying goes, time is money.

Easy to play

Like chess, **W:OH**, is by no means a difficult game to fathom. But the intricacies of the economic and combat model portrayed offer enough variety and options to warrant much more than a superficial discussion outlining the movement of units from Point A to Point B. Well before the first broadsword is swung, players need to grasp the basic tenets and principles underlying the construction of a flourishing hamlet.

W:OH is best compared with the venerable game of chess, because in the purest sense, the mechanics of gameplay necessitate coming to grips with variations in one's beginning, middle and end game tactics and strategy. For instance, the beginning game usually involves the systematic exploration of the immediate town environs, first to determine the proximity of both gold and lumber reserves as they relate to the town's location, and secondly to discover the lay of the land as it correlates with the overall defensive scheme of one's village.

Figure 1: This particular town layout not only fosters proper traffic flow, but allows the Peons ample avenues to travel to and from the Town Hall. Take note of the position of the barracks and temple, the principle structures responsible for the generation of troops and Necrolytes. By building them on the town fringes, units can quickly enter the fray of battle or man the ramparts. The gold mine has also been incorporated into the outer defensive works thus shielding the town. An astute player might wish to leave 100 units of gold in the mine thereby preventing the mine from collapsing.

Exploration of the masked countryside is usually a pretty straightforward affair, since most of the scenarios situate the player's town at either the north or south map edges. If this happens to be the case, survey both of the town's flanks before embarking upon a quest to uncover the lengthier and more treacherous vertical portion of the map. More often than not, the enemy's encampment lies somewhere at the opposite end of the map from where the player's camp is located. Likewise, on the odd occasion when the player's camp is located on either the eastern or western map edges, a good plan would be to investigate the northern and southern flanks first before setting out on an expedition towards the center.

Although it might seem reasonable to send out a lone soldier or peasant on a suicide scouting mission (a useful tactic to determine both the various natural boundaries, such as forests and lakes, or the location of additional gold reservoirs), it's best to avoid such a temptation. A prudent alternative is to confine their exploits until such time as they can be accompanied by additional troops, thereby reducing the likelihood that they will succumb to an enemy ambush.

Once a secure zone has been established, a good initial apportionment of the peasantry is to set foraging for gold and lumber at a two to one basis, since the early stages of the game require expenditures for the construction of several buildings and troop types. Depending on the proximity and state of exhaustion of the existing gold mines, this ratio may have to be altered as gameplay progresses.

When additional buildings are erected, the stockpiling of lumber becomes less of an issue in the middle and later portions of each scenario. Indeed, in some scenarios foraging is not even permitted! Once all of the advanced buildings are constructed, a judicious ratio for foraging might increase to, say, eight to one in favor of mining for gold, since gold alone is also used to research various clerical and military issues. Keep in mind though that a fair amount of lumber should be held in reserve to effect any repairs, build catapults, create archers and erect additional farms to support the maintenance of the peasantry and the troops in the field.

Once the location of the nearest Sherwood Forests and Fort Knoxes have been ascertained, it's time to commence with the construction of a town (Figure 1). First off, each farm supports no more than four units, so it becomes important for the player to construct more and more farms as the community's population rises. Subsequently, barracks are more necessary than lumber mills, not only to protect and better serve the kindred spirits but because they become prerequisites to the construction of the more advanced complexes.

Once the above have been erected, construct a Church/Temple first, then a Blacksmith's and Stable/Kennel and finally a Tower in that order. As soon as a Cleric/Necrolyte is available, resources should be devoted to the pursuit of healing/raising the dead and farseeing as quickly as resources permit, since both are essential ingredients to a successful strategy.

Hand in hand with the population explosion are such intangibles as congestion and traffic control. For instance, building six farms in a row may serve the player's short term needs but may also block the peasantry from delivering their goods to the Town Hall. Additionally, poor traffic flow can snarl or worse still, stop units altogether. Too many units traveling back and forth along one avenue can bog down thoroughfares, forcing the player to microman-

age traffic flows along with the all-important battles. Avoid placing more than two buildings together, especially the larger structures, since the time it takes for a unit to circumvent the site may prove disastrous over the course of a long game.

Advanced design

Once the basic foundation for the town has been laid, several scenarios require the construction of more advanced structures either to increase the strength of the standing army or to invalidate losses taken in battle. Figure 2 through 5 lists much of the empirical data supporting both the underlying economic and military models portrayed in the game.

Although the erecting of a wall might seem a plausible defensive scheme, often the costs of surrounding a thriving, ever expanding town are both prohibitive and probably exorbitant. When you consider the cost in gold to *complete* the wall versus how many troops might have been raised in that time, the tactic becomes questionable at best. Keep in mind that the town will no doubt experience growing pains in the later stages of the game. Placing new structures outside of the battlements invites unwelcomed trouble. Furthermore, the benefits a wall offers are indeed minimal, considering how quickly they can be demolished even by lowly footmen. It's the rare case indeed that necessitates the construction of fixed fortifications.❑

Figure 2: Unit Attribute Table

Units:	Visual Range	Hit Points	Time to Build	Secs to Build	Gold Cost	Lumber Cost	Attack Range	Armor	Attack Strength	Armor Piercing
Grunt/Footman	5	60	12	33	400	0	1	2	9	1
Peon/Peasant	5	40	15	41	400	0	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Catapults	11	120	20	55	900	200	8	0	255	0
Raider/Knight	7	90	16	44	850	0	1	5	13	1
Human Archer	9	60	14	38	450	50	5	1	0	4
Orc Spearman	9	60	14	38	450	50	4	1	0	5
Human Conjurer	9	40	18	50	900	0	3	0	0	6
Orc Warlock	7	40	18	50	900	0	2	0	0	6
Human Cleric	5	40	16	44	700	0	1	0	0	6
Orc Necrolyte	7	40	16	44	700	0	2	0	0	6
Non-Player Characters:										
Medivh	7	150	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5	0	0	10
Lothar	7	50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	5	15	1
Griselda	7	40	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Garona	7	30	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Creatures:										
Spider	5	30	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	0	3	1
Scorpion	5	30	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	0	0	3
Orc Skeleton	5	40	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	1	4	1
Daemon	7	300	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	0	65	0
	9	250	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3	0	0	40
Brigand	5	40	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	4	9	1
Fire Elemental	7	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	0	40	0
Dungeon Skeleton	7	30	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	2	9	1
Slime	7	150	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	10	0	1
Ogre	7	60	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	3	12	1
Structures:										
Farm	8	400	20	30	500	300	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Barracks	8	800	30	45	600	500	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Church/Temple	8	700	40	60	800	500	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Tower	8	900	40	60	1400	300	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Town Hall	8	2500	20	30	400	400	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Lumber Mill	8	600	30	45	600	500	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Kennel/Stable	8	500	30	45	1000	400	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Blacksmith	8	800	30	45	900	400	n/a	0	n/a	n/a

Legend: Square Size= 16x16 pixels (Visual/Attack Range measured in squares)

Special Considerations:

* Peons/Peasants move at 13 if carrying a sack of gold or a load of lumber.

** Raiders/Knights move at 18 if upgraded once, 21 if upgraded all the way.

-Upgrading armor once gives all units +2 armor, and upgrading armor all the way give +4 armor.

-Upgrading weapons gives sword/axe units +2 attack strength, and upgrading all the way gives +4 strength.

-Upgrading arrows/spears gives +2 armor pierceing, all the way give +4 armor piercing.

-If you still have your Town Hall, that's enough to support 1 unit. Each farm you have supports an additional 4 units.

-Click on any farm to see your current max units

Figure 3: Unit Attribute Table

Spell	Magic Cost	(info)
Seeing/Vision	50	
Spider/Scorpion	60	each
Demon/Elemental	255	
Invisibility	125	
Unholy Armor	125	
Raise Skeleton	70	each
Poison Cloud	50	
Rain of Fire	50	per 16 fireballs
Healing	3	per 1 HP healed

-Each time you cast Healing it will heal up to 40 hit points of damage to a unit.
-All summoned creatures last the same amount of time because their magic levels decrease at the same rate. Invisibility lasts 3 times as long as Unholy Armor.
-A Poison Cloud lasts 2 times as long as 1 Rain of Fire.
-A Poison Cloud slowly does 5 points of damage at a time to all units in the cloud.
Rain of Fire does 32 points of damage per hit.
Rain of Fire & Catapult hits also do a little bit of collateral damage to the 8 surrounding squares.

Figure 4: Unit's Rate of Movement Table

Unit	Movement Speed	Attack Speed	Move 10 Squares
Grunt/Footman	13	16	15
Peon/Peasant	16*	n/a	12
Catapults	7	2	28
Raider/Knight	16**	16	12
Human Archer	16	11	12
Orc Spearman	16	11	12
Human Conjurer	11	11	18
Orc Warlock	11	11	18
Human Cleric	11	13	18
Orc Necrolyle	11	13	18
Medivh	20	21	10
Lothar	16	16	12
Griselda	11	n/a	n/a
Garona	11	n/a	n/a
Spider	18	21	10
Scorpion	18	13	11
Orc Skeleton	10	8	20
Daemon	13	8	15
Water Elemental	14	10	14
Brigand	13	16	15
Fire Elemental	14	10	14
Dungeon Skeleton	10	9	20
Slime	12	5	16
Ogre	13	13	15

Legend:
All speeds measured in seconds are on a fast enough system set to normal speed. Movement speeds are the number of squares each unit could travel relative to each other. The "Move 10 Square" Column shows the number of seconds a unit moves 10 squares. Attack speeds are relative to the movement speeds and show the attack frequency.

Figure 5: Scenario Scoring

Score Range		Human Rank	Orc Rank	Level	Score Bonus
0	200	Slave	Slave	1	50
201	300	Peasant	Peon	2	50
301	400	Squire	Rogue	3	50
401	800	Footman	Grunt	4	300
801	1600	Corporal	Slasher	5	50
1601	2400	Sergeant	Sergeant	6	50
2401	3200	Lieutenant	Commander	7	55
3201	4000	Captain	Captain	8	500
4001	4800	Major	Major	9	50
4801	5200	Knight	Raider	10	50
5201	5600	General	General	11	50
5601	6000	Brigadier	Master	12	50
6001	6400	Marshall	Marshall		
6401	6800	Lord	Slayer		
6801	7200	Duke	Dictator		
7201	9600	War Leader	War Chief		

over 9600 points is quite good, and you get a special ranking

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FRONT LINES

Impressions

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Combat! Animated units defend HQ

MASTERING THE

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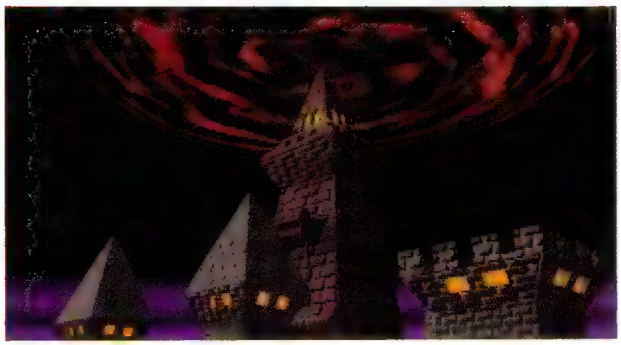
HINTS & TIPS



In my last column I set out the basic goals of **Master of Magic (MoM)**, and made some recommendations for getting started. Since that article appeared, *MicroProse* has released a version 1.2 patch that addresses some of the instability issues that have plagued the product, and also adds significant changes to the gameplay. I won't enumerate the changes here (nearly 100 are noted in the 9-page readme file accompanying the patch), but you're encouraged to upgrade either by downloading the patch from *CompuServe*, or by contacting *MicroProse* directly.

Building your fortress

The game plays from an unusual perspective. You play the part of a controlling Wizard who's never actually depicted anywhere in the game, but who watches from a disembodied distance, controlling the movement of Heroes and armies, and assisting them in battle. The first thing to do is take your starting armies (there are two) and put them to work locating a site for your Enchanted Fortress, the first city you will control. Send your two armies off in different directions to maximize the number of squares uncovered during their explorations. Remember, this game is a race against time and every move is precious. *Think* before you make a move in any direction, and consider how that move fits your plans.

When considering a site for a new City, *always* consult the Surveyor function first by hitting the F1 key and then running your mouse around the map (see Figure 1). You'll see a wide variation in terrain conditions from square to square, many of which are not apparent from a visual inspection alone. For example, one square might support a maximum city population of 18, while an adjoining square with seemingly identical visual characteristics might support only 9. A limitation like that will cost you plenty once the game is underway and it's too late to relocate. Whenever possible, look for terrain specials like the presence of a rare mineral (e.g., Adamantium or Crysx Crystals). As in **Civilization**, there are significant bonuses for building on rivers and coasts. Read your survey and try to balance your desire for the perfect location against the knowledge that while you're window-shopping, your computer opponents are laying a foundation for your destruction.

There are two ways to acquire cities: build a new outpost with one of your two starting armies (or with Settlers built later), or take over someone else's city. In the former case, you'll start from scratch, building the city as you like it with a citizenry based on the race you began with. In the latter case, your building projects will proceed from wherever that city left off (usually a state of ruin after you've conquered it). Note that when you take over an existing city, you gain a population based on whatever race occupied the city. As your game develops you'll learn that having a diverse population enables a more varied and exotic production capability.

Generally speaking, concentrate initially on erecting buildings that enhance your food and gold supply. Later in the game, when you've got a steady surplus of gold and a reliable measure of food, shift toward the magic-enhancing facilities. But first get your essentials in place. I like to produce as much gold as possible each turn, but only enough food to have a surplus of one or two per turn. If you're generating more food than that, you're better off diverting one of your farmers toward a more productive enterprise. In the City window, simply click on the next-to-last farmer to reduce the number of farmers (thus increasing the number of production workers). If you start running low on food (watch this carefully, your armies will die off *quickly* if not fed), go back to the City screen and click on a production worker to turn him back into a farmer.

Magic 101

Magic is the essence of this game and to do well requires a complete understanding of the system. Click on the Magic button to see your Magic screen (see Figure 2). Here's where you'll control the allocation of your incoming magic power. First some definitions: *magic power* translates roughly into a kind of raw magic "ore" that is produced in various ways throughout the game's territories, a portion of which can be harnessed by any of the players and used to "fund" specific activities. You can direct some of this magic power to your cause by capturing Magic Nodes, building special buildings, and sometimes simply by

Figure 1

Figure 2

MAGIC

nomics in Master of Magic

virtue of having certain races working for you. However accumulated, the sum total of magic power being harnessed by you per turn is reflected by the figure next to "Power Base" in the Magic Screen (Figure 2).

Three concepts are important to understand: **Mana** (a.k.a. Mana Reserves), **Research**, and **Skill**, (a.k.a. Spell Casting Skill). Think of Mana as your magic bank account, holding the total magic power available to you at a given time to fund certain magical activities. For example, you might want to create a magical artifact that has a Mana cost of 1000. If you have 2500 Mana in your Mana Reserves and create this artifact, you'll be left with 1500 Mana. If your production priorities are in order, you should be gaining a small bit of Mana each turn thereby increasing your Mana Reserves. **Research** is an activity funded by magic power, and enables you to learn new spells. Finally, **Spell Casting Skill** can be thought of as the amount of Mana that you can draw from your Mana Reserves during one turn (a "turn" consists either of one movement turn on the overland map, or one complete combat session). In your city production you'll see that creating a particular building "adds 2 to your Mana", for example. What this means is that you'll increase your Mana Reserve each turn by two. Similarly, another building may have the effect of "adding 3 to your Research," meaning that you'll have three more points devoted to Research each turn.

The three controls in the Magic Screen allow you to allocate your incoming magic power to each of these three areas. Notice how the player in Figure 2 has decided to divert virtually all of his incoming magic power to Research. In the early stages of the game it's usually a better idea to split up your allocation between each of the three areas in order to build up your Reserves, learn important new spells, and enable sufficient Casting ability to handle the inevitable combat sorties, respectively. However, when a particular strategy presents itself, it's helpful to know that you can quickly and easily divert your allocation to reflect current priorities. Notice in Figure 2 that the player is researching the spell "**Spell of Mastery**". As pointed out in my last article, successfully casting this spell automatically wins the game, so this player's decided to go for broke by throwing all of his incoming magic power into Research in order to learn this game-winning spell as soon as possible. Remember, your computer opponents may be trying the same thing.

Combat

Once a battle commences, the computer will cycle through each of your players and await your instruction at each stop. Depending on the type of armies you've employed, each will have the option to melee

Figure 5

(hand to hand), range attack (arrows, spears, magic fireballs, etc.), or cast a spell. Additionally, you, as controlling Wizard, can participate in the combat by casting spells of your own at any time. The only limitation is the amount of Spell Casting Skill you've allocated, which governs the amount of Mana you'll be allowed to expend for combat spells during this battle. When you're about to go out on a serious combat campaign, keep this in mind and visit the Magic screen to allocate accordingly beforehand.

You're going to come across some fierce opponents, and you'll need all the magic help you can get in addition to strong armies. Consider beginning your battles with some good defensive spells like "Dispel," which has the effect, if successful, of shutting down some of your opponent's own magic enchantments (see Figure 3). Don't spend too much time on defensive spells, however, and remember that your armies have limited Mana available for spell casting. Once it's gone, they're back to the spears and daggers.

One of my favorite offensive spells is Web, a Common Nature spell that will stop just about anything in its tracks including the most ferocious and fearless monsters, allowing your grunts to go to work bringing them down while still "entangled". Keep your pieces on the move and try to have them end their turns away from monsters, so that the bad guys will have to use up movement points approaching your pieces before attacking. The ideal situation is to have your opponents end their turn next to your guys without attacking, allowing your guys to use up part of their turn attacking, and then, if prudent, retreating to a more secure position. I've dragged monsters all around the screen this way, wearing them down and mowing them down when they're weakest.

There's so much more to this game and its tactics that I haven't had the space here to touch on, I may have to return in the future with more. For now, however, unnamed Wizards are casting "End of Article."❑

HINTS & TIPS

Figure 3

Figure 4

STALINGRAD, MY ST

Mark Walker deploys reality bytes for Avalon Hill's

HINTS & TIPS

Fellow chipheads I'm here to tell you *Avalon Hill*'s **Stalingrad** is a good model of reality. Damn good. And all it takes to win is a sound combined arms strategy coupled with luck — kinda like reality.

Bite the bullet

Let's talk beans and bullets. Tanks are way cool, artillery is way devastating, and air support is the cherry on top. Yet none of it works (well okay, you can still summon the air gods) without supply. Folks from Keith Zabalaoui — president of *Atomic Games*, through experienced play testers agree supply is the critical issue in **Stalingrad**.

Obviously, assign attack supply to formations in contact with and assaulting, or being assaulted by, the enemy. Set rear area formations supply to minimal. Watch the distance your units stray from their boss and don't hesitate to attach them to a closer headquarters.

Deny supply to the enemy and his deprived units can be overwhelmed easily. Remember, units cannot trace their line of supply through zones of control (ZOC). When on the receiving end of the encirclement game, slip a friendly unit adjacent to the hurting element; friendlies negate ZOC. On a grander scale, rather than screen enemy breakthroughs, pinch them off at the point of penetration. The surrounded enemy units will be nearly immobile and easy prey for a counterattack.

Nobody attacks alone. This is combined arms warfare. Unless an attacker is able to bring overwhelming numbers to bear he will be defeated without air, artillery, leadership and special unit support. Don't panic if the initial odds for the main attack of your turn is low; look for help.

Artillery is the most reliable of a player's supporting arms. Massed artillery fire can frequently raise an otherwise low odds attack to acceptable levels. Don't fritter away the artillery. Decide where the main point of battle is and commit your guns massively to it. Rarely use the artillery for anything other than barraging. If you're concerned a unit will be attacked in the upcoming execution phase, barrage the would-be attackers. In addition to inflicting casualties and fatigue levels (if the odds are 1:1 or greater) the artillery unit's support strength will be assigned to any adjacent friendly unit attacked.

The German 6th Panzer Division.

Beginning screen "To the Volga"

Air

"Air attacks," as **Stalingrad** play-tester Carl Rugenstein says, "are good for piling on." Well put, Carl. Air support can be a devastating tool. However, it is unreliable. Clouds, anti-aircraft fire, and dumb luck can prevent a squadron from accomplishing its mission. Don't use air support to bolster critical yet low odds attacks to an acceptable level. If you do, the pilots will take a day off. Rather, the air formations should provide the final stroke on attacks that already have a good chance of success. This "piling on" can be the difference in retreating the enemy or eliminating him.

Leaders

Somebody has to tell these guys what to do. That's where the leaders come in. Leaders should be used with the best formations in the most demanding situations. Unlike artillery, or air support, leadership modifiers count in overruns. This can provide as much as a three column shift for a stack lead by Manstein. Perhaps the difference in ending movement adjacent to an enemy unit or crushing it in an overrun.

That supply and support stuff is great, but first things first. Use the right unit for the job! If engineers are available youre a fool to assault a city hex without them. Stack motorized or mechanized infantry with the armored formations to make killer overrun stacks. An anti-tank battalion can pop a mean ambush on an armored unit when properly placed in a city hex. The cavalry, with their weaker attack factors, are great for probing reconnaissance attacks. And don't forget: tanks do a great job of killing other tanks (if the other tanks have inferior armor factors).

Use the right attack for the job. Overruns are ruinous when properly directed against weakened units in open terrain, but it's fruitless to overrun a strong fresh enemy unit. Here's the winning tactic. Attack the unit in question from a couple of hexes with big time artillery and air support. Set all but one unit to attack with no advance. Now plot a strong armored unit to move into and through the defender's hex. Plan this armored unit's movement into a likely retreat hex for the defender. If the war gods are with you, the initial attack will attrite, disrupt, fatigue, and retreat the defender. The follow-on armored movement will overrun the enemy unit and eliminate it. By the way, don't hope for much from the armored units in

ALINGRAD

rand strategy game

cities. Defender's anti-tank strength is doubled and in the 400 meter per hex scenarios armor receives a further negative one column shift.

Probe attacks are a valuable, if seldom used, tool. For very little cost in fatigue levels probes glean valuable information about the opposing forces. As stated above, the horses do a good job here. They're weak, but when supported by artillery they are just what the doctor ordered to find out how strong that armor unit sitting in front of you is.

"Early to bed and late to rise makes a unit healthy, stealthy, and supplied." When asked for a quotable quote from the lead programmer for **Stalingrad**, Jeff Wesevich, that was the answer. I've read it before; don't move, attack, or otherwise party with your troops at night.

Maybe, maybe not.

Night moves

Yeah, you will accrue some radical fatigue and disorganization levels when operating in the wee hours. However, once every blue moon an opportunity may arise that is too good to refuse. Don't click the execution phase button robotically without first perusing the situation just because it's getting dark outside. If you can maneuver to surround significant enemy formations, do it. Come morning you'll need sleep, but the bad guys will need food. Your troops can rest (a little) during the day; the only cure for the other guy's hunger may be his destruction.

Almost last, but certainly not least, plan. Yuck, you say, this is supposed to be a game, I don't need no stink'n plan, man. True, but if you like winning I'd give it a shot. Before starting a scenario get cozy with it. Look at the map from the zoomed out view. Note the objectives, which ones pay the most, and who can get there. Then jot down a simple plan; assign formations to objectives or missions (such as screening other formations or attacks). Use a 3" X 5" card. It takes about ten minutes and is the single most important step to victory.

Scenario snapshots

To the Volga: Pretty simple stuff here. Play it as a straight pincer attack. In the south the 94th Infantry Division heads north. Its objectives are the Lasur Chemical Works, The Red October Factory, and Crossing 62. In the north, the 14th Panzer and the 389th Infantry Division, with lots of engineer support, will drive to the Red Barricades. The 305th holds in the middle. At night use some artillery to interdict the crossing.

A River too Far: Send the 23rd Panzer, 6th Rumanian, and 57th Corp's cavalry assets east. Hopefully, they will capture Zhutovo Station and Antonov. Together these hexes are worth 27 victory points per turn. The 6th Panzer will conduct a shallow turning movement to the north of these units. Their mission is to protect the flank of the 23rd Panzer from the onrushing Soviets. Meanwhile, in the west, the 17th Panzer speeds toward Nizhne-Kunisky and Chernomorov. Beware! The Russian 7th Tank and 4th Mechanized Divisions will come south like bats out of hell. They will attempt to knock the stuffing out of the 6th Panzer. Stick to your guns, if you continue to push north with the 17th the computer player will call off the future ex-communist dogs and rush to protect the northern victory hexes.

That's a wrap, boys. There are more scenarios but their secrets will be left untold, awaiting your discovery. No doubt, **Stalingrad**'s strong suite is its realistic portrayal of combined arms conflict. If a tactic worked on the Russian front it will probably work in **Stalingrad**. This makes the game a joy to play and a tips and hints article a snap to write. Later.❑

Stalingrad weather and calender display.

The theater of operations.

Opening campaign game screen (zoom out).

TRANSPORT TYCOON

Unca's strategies for beginners

HINTS & TIPS

Microprose's **Transport Tycoon** can be intimidating for beginning strategy gamers. The following tutorial is designed to help them build a profitable transport empire.

In the beginning, select the following difficulty levels. No competition, many (high) towns and industries, and give yourself $1,000,000. Let the interest rate remain at 2%, vehicle running costs low, allow no breakdowns and change the subsidy multiplier to times four. The terrain should be very flat, with medium lakes, a steady economy with trains reversing at the end of line and at stations. Allow no disasters. Select "New Game," and a customized (non competitive) random world will be built for you in two hundred-and-fifty-six color SVGA!

The owners window will pop up. Type in a name, select a face and a color. Select the blue disk icon from the palette of icons at the top of the screen (second from the left) and save the game. The save game should read something like "Boss Transport, January 1930." The various icons at the top of the screen are: *two gold bars*, for toggling between the exact date or just the name of the month ; *disk icon*, for Save, and Quit menu; *buildings*, for a menu of all your transport stations no matter what type; *grid*, for a map view of the world; *gold coins*, for financial information; *tophat*, for owner's information; *graph*, for various charts on income; *train*, for a list of your train lines; *truck*, for a list of truck and bus lines; *ship*, for a list of your ships; *plane*, for a list of your planes; *plus magnifier*, for zooming in; *minus magnifier*, for zooming out; *rails*, for a railroad construction menu; *road*, for a road construction menu; *water canal*; for a ship construction menu; *airport*, for an airport construction menu; and *trees*, for a forest construction menu

. Click on the *grid* icon (after closing the owners info window). A small map window will pop up. Click in the upper right hand corner to enlarge the map. The position of the city you start in is bracketed with four yellow corner brackets. Click on the brackets for a close up view. Click on the zoom modifiers of the close up view to make the view smaller or larger.

Explore the map. It's easiest to scroll around the zoomed area by using the arrow keys. Use the mouse to click on the parts of the *grid* map you wish to look at. Look for at least two cities that can easily be connected by rail, without having to level much land. Make sure that the cities can be easily connected by road to other nearby cities, farms and industries.

Take your time. Click on the names of cities to view information abut their populations. The larger cities will provide more passengers for your railroad. When you've decided which two cities you want to connect, quit and load the game again. While you were exploring, game time was rapidly passing, and you'll want to get in the habit of going back to earlier saves so that you don't waste game time scouting or making building mistakes. Later, you'll play against decisive, accurate competition and the time you save matters.

There are other, perhaps even better strategies for playing the game, but I grew to depend on starting with a short, passenger and mail line in **Railroad Tycoon**. Building one provides a steady income in **Transport Tycoon**, as well.

Working on the railroad...

Select the *rails* icon from the palette. Selecting either the *rails, road, airport* and *water canal* icons brings up a small construction menu. Each is similar in that it includes a bulldozer for clearing land, and the means to level land by filling or tearing it down. They differ in what else they offer for construction choices. A working railroad first needs two stations with at least a single track connecting them, and a depot behind each station. The land must be flat on which the buildings and tracks are placed. The buildings and track must be facing the proper direction in order to place them. Use the tip of the arrow of the icon to properly place rail and buildings. This may take a bit of trial and error until you select the buildings and track with the proper facing. All of the choices you need are on the construction menu.

City with bus and railroad stations

Start with two stations with the two track option. You only need buy a single depot for each station and lay only one track between them. The second track and the two other depots can be added when there is more demand for additional trains. Also, remember that a single track can bear more than one train as long as you build stop signals on the line.

Put a train on the track. Double-click on one of the depots to see a menu of your choices of engines and cars to buy (or select the train icon from the palette). Start by buying an engine, a passenger car and a mailcar. A window showing your train line will pop up with an additional palette of four icons along its side. The label of the train will read "stopped." The icons are of an *eyeball*, a *dome-shaped building with an arrow*, an *X*, a *series of arrows* and a *document*. The most important icon for you to remember is the *series of arrows*. That is the "go to" icon. Using it directs the train where to go. Click on it and then on one of the stations, click on it again and click on the other station you are connecting.

You have a number of open windows on the screen, now. Get rid of all of them but the one with the illustration of train number one which is stopped. Click on "stopped" and the train will go back and forth between the two stations, the label informing you of its actions.

Congratulations! You now have the foundation of a transport empire. Click on each station to see windows on what each station accepts and has waiting for pickup. Click on the *gold coins* icon in the palette for financial information. The upper left hand corner of the main screen always keeps track of the date and balance amount, but the *gold coins* information window does, too.
Save the game again.

The bus stops here...

Railroads provide basic income, but big bucks come from bus lines with less investment. Buses are cheaper to buy and cost less to run, and there's a much larger pool of passengers to service. I had to buy seven buses to service the three hundred waiting passengers at my first station. In 1948 each of my seven buses provided an average profit of over ten thousand dollars per bus. My first train line's profit never averaged more than six or seven thousand dollars a year. However, the second line, with a faster train averaged over thirty thousand dollars a year.

Click the *road* icon to bring up the road construction menu. The menu has three types of buildings, one is the motor pool where the buses and trucks are built and maintained, the other two are truck or bus stations. Again, facing is important. The open end of the station must face the road to which it connects. Build a motor pool along the route between stations. A truck station built next to a farm, industry, airport or a train station has access to the goods produced or carried by each. A farm produces livestock and grain. Each takes a specific type of truck to carry the product. Truck the livestock and grain to a station near an accepting factory and it will produce goods that a goods truck can carry to an accepting station.

The only way to fly...

Airports and planes cost big bucks. An airplane can return thirty thousand dollars a year for the investment, however, and that's just for an air line that only flies non-stop between two airports. The airport construction menu is very short. You need only buy an airport and place it on six flat squares of land. There is no motor pool to buy. Click on the hanger to buy a plane. Place your airports in large cities that are far apart for the best return on your investment.

Anchors Aweigh...

Finally, to make your Empire complete, build a pair of docks and a motor pool for ships (which sells and repairs ships). Buy a ferry and put it to work going from dock to dock. Place the motor pool anyplace in the water along the shore between the two docks. The docks attach to a road leading to the edge of the water.❑

City with railroad

REVIEW

HARPOON II WESTPAC SCENARIO

The **Westpac** scenarios might be summed up as same scenarios, different places. These vignettes continue the exploration of the "brushfire" wars we are most likely to see in the real world rather than the superpower battles that were the hallmark of **Harpoon I**.

The stage set now reflects an Asian theme. North Korea is featured in one-third of the scenarios, while several more involve Indonesia. Vietnam, China, Russia and the US add to the list of usual suspects. The largest scenario pits Russia against a US CVBG. The Russians have sixteen Backfires, six Bear Fs and a host of fighters to cope with the evil Tomcat and his friend Phoenix (". . . they hurts us, they hurts the precious").

The fifteen scenarios roughly parallel in size and scope those in the first battleset, though the three largest (Defense of a Friend, Operation Big Bash and Battle for the Yellow Sea) are all somewhat larger than the biggest scenario from the first set.

Battle for the Yellow Sea has an intriguing setup. You play either the US, North Korea *or* China. China and North Korea are allies, but you only control the ally you choose to play. While the US has a well-equipped CVBG and the allies have pitiful surface and air assets, what makes life interesting for the US are their victory conditions, which require them to sweep the Yellow Sea clean of subs and the uncertainty about China's participation, meaning that China will get the first shot. By the way, did I mention that the Yellow Sea is knee deep in subs? Whatever role players choose, side ID and coordination will certainly make life interesting, as the Chinese say.

Was it something I said?

Westpac does not include the long-awaited major patch for **Harpoon II**, but they did manage to introduce a major new bugs along with minor code revisions. Periodically air groups and missiles disappear from the game when they receive new orders over land, something I had not seen before, so you might want to keep a copy of the **Harpoon II** directories handy to unpatch the patch.

What **Westpac** delivers is more of those nasty two-guys-fighting-in-a-broom-closet-with-grenades style dust-ups typical of the first battleset with some twists and turns along the way to keep players guessing, plus numerous new platforms (one hundred or so) for spice. If nothing else, players can learn firsthand all the designations for Chinese versions of Soviet weapons systems <wink>.❑

Samuel Brown Baker II

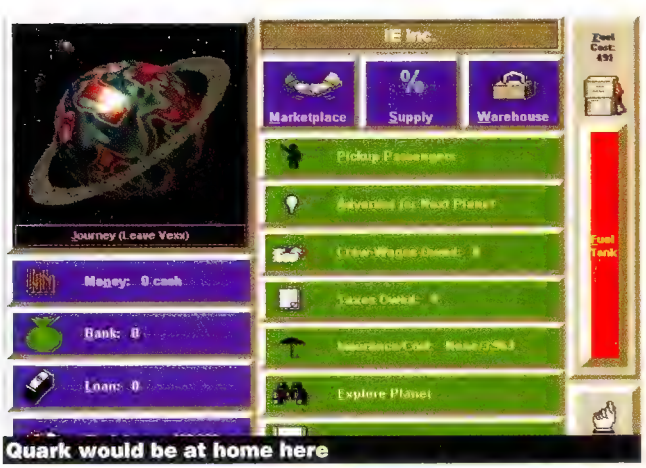
Designed by: Three-Sixty
Published by: Intracorp
Systems: IBM PC
Sound: All major sound cards
Supports: Mouse, keyboard

GAZILLIONAIRE

I'm a sucker for a game like **Gazillionaire**, from *LavaMind*. There's nothing complicated about it. As a matter of fact, it's somewhat of an exaggeration to call it a resource management game, since the only resource that you have any direct control over is money. Playing **Gazillionaire** gives you a good feel for what it might be like to dabble in commodities or play the stock market, since the key to winning is buying low and selling high.

Each planet's marketplace includes a list of all the commodities available for trade, their present price, and the range of prices paid for the product in the various planets. Before you make your buying and selling decisions, you can call up a chart which shows what sort of demand there is for your particular planet's products at other marketplaces.

Your warehouses add the element of speculation to the game. If there's no market for an incredibly cheap commodity available on a particular planet, you can still buy it and simply stash it until the price improves enough to give you the swollen profit that you so richly deserve.



Quark would be at home here

Unfortunately, warehouse management is one of the game's major flaws. There's no menu available that allows you to see what's in all of your warehouses, which means you have to (gasp!) write stuff down if you want to keep track of what you're storing.

The game's interface is very simple and easy to learn, but you have to cycle through several menus to manage your assets, a problem that **Gazillionaire** shares with virtually every other business game I've ever played.

Gazillionaire makes you keep track of a number of different elements. Your crew, a collection of ungrateful wretches, wants to be paid every week. You can spend as much, or as little, as you want on advertising. You can delay paying your taxes – at least until the tax collector starts making threatening noises about confiscating your cargo. And, you can even brave the dangers of deep space and elect not to insure every trip your ship makes.

Something that I enjoyed about this game which may not appeal to everyone is the fact that you can't spend your opponents into oblivion. This is very much a staunch Republican's nightmare: a managed economy). You can't expand your ship's cargo space at will. That's up to the government, which holds an auction of cargo upgrades, meaning that you're bidding against your six opponents for the extra space. Extra warehouse space isn't auctioned, but only happens when the government wants it to, at the government's price.

This all may sound too simple to be much fun, but in fact **Gazillionaire** is an extremely addictive game. There's just something truly magical about buying at 180 kubars a ton, then flying to another planet and selling for 720 kubars a ton, eh?❑

Meg Andronikos

Designed by: LavaMind
Published by: Spectrum Holobyte
Systems: IBM PC

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BATTLEDROME

Steve Wartofsky looks at Dynamix' new Herc game from a multiplayer perspective

OVER THE NET

While there have been a number of turn-based modem and network games that have gained popularity primarily because they've actually worked well, the score for real-time, 3D combat designs played across networks and/or modems is much lower. **Falcon 3.0** was from its inception an effort to do network play, and after a few years some people with lots of knowledge and patience actually have gotten it to work via both modem and network. Most have not. *INN*'s version of **Red Baron** is reasonably playable, but marred by sudden in-flight interruptions during data transfers, rendering real-time combat options almost useless. Then there's **Air Warrior**, probably the best commercial network real-time game out there right now which works well.

And there's *Dynamix'* new **Battledrome**, released fast on the heels of **Earthsiege**. **Battledrome** makes it clear that at least so far, in network or modem play you just can't have your cake and eat it, too, when it comes to the visuals and sound. Both are carefully designed to provide spot detail and wonderful atmosphere, but players trained on **Earthsiege** will no doubt experience initial disappointment upon turning to **Battledrome**. Fear not; the reduction in graphics objects is invaluable when it comes to maintaining the pace of play during modem or network connections.

Switch off, contact

As with most current multiplayer/multi-computer designs, **Battledrome** necessitates that you switch off error correction, data compression and flow control options on your modem to make the optimal modem connection. What no-one cares to indicate for some reason is that doing so, while optimizing the connection, reduces it to a maximum of 9600 baud, so 14,400 and 28,800 fans should realize they're not getting any massive improvement in throughput for modem play when playing using such faster modems (using a definitely identifiable 16550A UART as the serial communications port for the modem, whether via modem card or serial port, is another story altogether; as Bob Perez pointed out in a recent article on **Wing Commander Armada** in our pages, a fast UART is probably more important than a beyond-14.4 modem for optimized modem multiplayer).

Unlike most other modem-oriented designs, however, **Battledrome** comes with perhaps the most useful README.TXT ever assembled for computer gaming: included in the text file is a list of almost every major modem brand out there, and the commands necessary to use on each modem to turn off the above options prior to play. For anyone who's finally figured out how to handle downloading modem init strings to the modem, this information will prove invaluable. For anyone who's still perplexed by how to download a modem init string to the modem and make it stick prior to booting up game software, more instruction will be needed. Someone out there should provide a universal "how to configure your modem" text file, to be included with any game offering modem support, to deal with this problem.

Logged in play value

Beyond the connection and configuration issues pervasive to this kind of gaming, the other hangup that cools the most ardent modem-gamer's heels is, er, cost. **Battledrome** itself is quite reasonably priced for what's offered (the computer opponent is highly credible, the betting/upgrading system should have made its way across to **Earthsiege** for the "live" feel it gives to the game, etc.), but every gamer who's tried a few modem connections for play has at one time or another asked the question, "is this worth 15 to 25 cents a minute?" The answer is usually no, given the amount of down-time compared with play-time typical of (especially turn-based) modem gaming. In a real-time 3D design, spending a lot of time wandering around empty spaces while filling the phone company's pockets may provide an exciting, enervating experience all in itself, but fun it's not. The question, then, is whether any modem real-time game offers adequate involving play-time-per-minute-of-connect-time (PTPMoCT). This is the make or break issue for a good modem game, really.

Battledrome makes it, but just under the wire; there *is* a certain amount of aimless wandering when two players are playing against each other, but the size of the arena is controllable, and if set to small or tiny, wandering time will — believe it — be reduced to a serious minimum. Setting up obstacles and neutral static units which will fire upon any player when near also helps optimize excitement value.

The game comes with a host of options to contextualize the arena; when playing over a LAN with more than two players, the whole setup of each round becomes particularly interesting, as live negotiations over wagers, weapons allowed, victory conditions can be entered into prior to battle, adding much to the excitement of multiplayer play. When playing via modem (as well as on a net), the chat facility is easy to use so that real-time battle challenges can be issued quickly and persuasively.

The final word is that **Battledrome** is indeed an *excellent* multiplayer design, optimized for that environment — for those who are already familiar with same. Everyone needs to do more work to make that environment more readily available, however. *Dynamix* has done their part.❑

Caught by surprise

Gentlemen, choose your weapons

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AIR WARRIOR

J. Grant Bell gets the lowdown on the latest in Kesmai's killer air combat

OVER THE NET

What's new with **Air Warrior**? If you haven't played it recently, it may be worth another look. And if you've never seen it before, it's definitely worth a try. **Air Warrior** is a multiplayer game by *Kesmai* that can be found currently on *GEnie*, *CRIS II*, and *Delphi*. Up to 50 players may participate in a single game. Both single missions and campaigns can be played out. World War I and II aircraft are both available, and the player can choose to fight in one of many high- or low- realism areas.

Start me up

A multiplayer version of **Air Warrior** can be downloaded from the on-line services that support it (*GEnie*, *CRIS II*, *Delphi*). This front-end can be modified with a variety of downloadable graphics that will make your plane or vehicle look more realistic. **Air Warrior**'s graphics are somewhat spare, as is common in flight simulators, but are very crisp. **Air Warrior** runs in Super VGA 640X480 mode, unlike the majority of flight sims which use 320X200 (VGA). The engine allows a variety of controls and input devices, including the **Thrustmaster** series of controls. These controls are highly recommended if you're serious about playing **Air Warrior**.

The engine is highly customizable and quite flexible. A variety of visual and audio effects can be toggled on and off: you can remove certain graphic details to maximize the simulation speed, or eliminate the engine noise while retaining other sounds. A few ground vehicles can be played, as well. So if you're just dying to drive a jeep while the others fly overhead, this game is for you.

New features

The primary difference between the **Air Warrior** of today and that of two years ago is realism. The older **Air Warrior** did not take into account all those nasty yet realistic aspects of flight - accelerated stalls, blackouts, redouts - that inspire a degree of caution in the pilot. Without these restraints in place, combat soon became an exercise in sharp turns and endless spirals. Aircraft with marginally superior performance almost always came out on top in these none-too-realistic frays, and very few of the available planes were actually used. Now, with the implementation of more realistic physics, it is common to see a variety of planes in action.

One of **Air Warrior**'s best features is sheer range. On-line battles can take place in a number of areas, each of which supports different sorts of battles. Gamers interested in head-to-head dogfights without all that icky realism can fight in a number of "half-time" areas. Battles fought in these areas take place under compressed time and offer an easy-going take on physics. In other words, these areas are much like the older incarnations of **Air Warrior**. Half-time battles stress playability over realism, and are a good starting point for all players. About

Take that!

half of **Air Warrior**'s on-line pilots prefer this highly playable version of **Air Warrior**.

Campaigns are another feature of **Air Warrior**. Players can join historical scenarios that last for two to three weeks and consist of about ten missions. These campaigns restrict players' decisions, but these restrictions make the whole experience much more real. Instead of freely choosing aircraft and teammates (as in more open areas), gamers will be limited in their choice of aircraft and starting locations by historical conditions.

There are even specialty areas such as the "One Life to Live" theater of war. Players only get one or two lives per evening in this area — so if they are shot down, that's it for the night. This is a great way of making every kill count. Certainly, this variant might inspire conservative (some might say "cowardly") behavior, but the thrill of victory and agony of defeat are amplified tenfold when you play for such high stakes. Once you're killed, though, you can always play in one of the numerous other flight areas on-line.

If you're a hard-core simulation fan and want to leap right into **Air Warrior**, it's best to buy the boxed game. It's available from a wide variety of retailers and mail-order places. This set will give you all the graphics you need (so you don't have to spend lots of time downloading) as well as some very welcome printed documentation and basic computer opposition for single-player games. A new version of the boxed set will appear this spring, offering substantially improved computer AI as well as a host of minor graphic improvements. Otherwise, just hook up to an on-line provider and download the software. Be prepared for a steep learning curve! If you perservere, though, you'll discover an on-line flight experience which is truly unparalleled.❑

Gotta look at the old tactical map.

Here come the reinforcements.

REACH OUT AND TORCH SOMEONE

Marc Dultz comments on head-to-head play in Warcraft: Orcs and Humans

OVER THE NET

I think you're pretty handy with that broadsword and crossbow, huh Beelzebub? Well, it's one thing to quell the burning homefires of an erstwhile computer opponent in **Warcraft**; quite another to nobly dodge a fellow human being's chorus of slings and arrows. Here's some general tips that should earn the novice general a few quick and relatively cheap chevrons in head-to-head play.

What you see is what you get

Like most games incorporating both solo and head-to-head playing modes, strategy and tactics in **Warcraft** assumes an entirely different complexion when you first sit down to play a live, bill-paying opponent. Indeed, players should remember that three separate races are occuring throughout the early to middle stages of this real-time based game, all of which gradually influence the overall course of the conflict.

First off, play typically turns into a hectic footrace to determine the proximity and location of the nearest forests and gold mines. Without these vital components, even the most steadfast of game plans will invariably wither on the vine. Secondly, another competition is frantically underway, to build a thriving camp which is not only complete with a latticework of varying structures, but also whose sole purpose is to propagate exponentially the size and vitality of both the worker and soldier/spellcaster populace. Lastly, and perhaps the most challenging contest at work involves the exploration of the map for the purpose of defeating the opponent. While this sounds like an exercise in simple map reading, a cat and mouse scenario usually ensues, typically consisting of a feeling out phase followed up by a few minor skirmishes. A good initial strategy might even entail forsaking combat in favor of ascertaining the safest route to the enemy's homeland.

Keeping all these dynamic interrelationships in mind then, a successful strategy attempts to integrate those aspects of the three contests in such a way that they maximize the player's own efforts while nullifying some or all of the opponent's. What you see is what you'll work with, so successful head-to-head play in **Warcraft** will involve gathering more pertinent information about the important features of the map than your enemy can, and earlier.

For instance, a good opening strategy would utilize a single footman to scout out the whereabouts of key terrain features such as bridges, gold mines and swamps, the enemy's encampment and most importantly, interrupting his attempts at foraging. Not only does this strategy unveil more of the masked mapboard to you, but in so doing serves as an early warning device, alerting you to either the buildup or transit of enemy forces.

Once you've identified your enemy's logistical centers, good follow-on strategies involve the use of either long distance magic spells and catapult strikes or swift cavalry attacks to further upset your enemy's construction efforts.

This is the army, Mr. Jones

While it would be ideal to raise an army along simple guidelines, the fact of the matter is that the proximity and abundance of lumber may impinge upon one's military plans. Ample forests can obviously support any type of defensive and offensive military buildup and therefore can support the raising of a huge archer and catapult based strike force.

Both the defoliaging of the nearby forests and the lack of additional reserves may force players to rethink their strategies though. An archer and catapult based force requires a good deal of lumber to construct, especially in a war of attrition, and therefore may pose a problem in the long run. Swamp and dungeon based scenarios might require even dire alterations in the mix of one's combat forces as players will have to resort to the conscription of both footmen and the more expensive knights to fill the void.

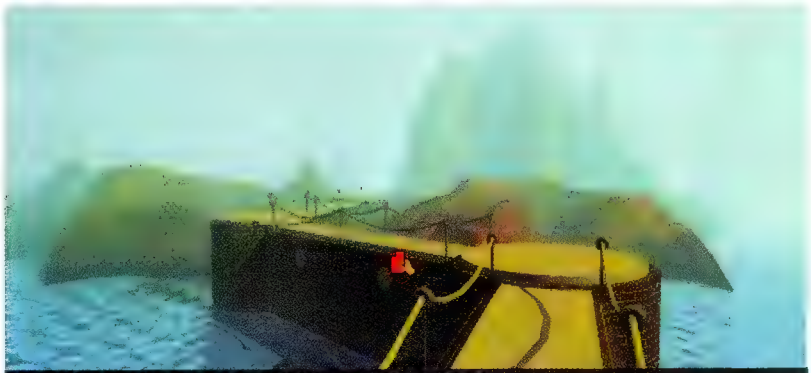
One last word needs to be mentioned regarding head-to-head play. Make use of every moment of your connect time. Even when all of your troops and workers have been given their marching orders and every possible facility is busily fabricating additional units, time should be allocated to the transmission of inocuous, but not obnoxious, messages to your opponent. Telegrams like, "isn't it difficult to steer three catapults through the city streets" or "it looks like you're running out of gold soon" will keep your opponent guessing about your military and intelligence gathering capabilities. Furthermore, this tactic might even force your opponent to the keyboard as he spells out a return message; all the while you'll be teaching him how to spell disaster with your battleaxes and fireballs.❑

Figure 1: A footman marches off into the hinterlands to gather information

Figure 2: The hills may be alive with the sound of music but the swamps bubble with trouble. A quick, cavalry based force should even save Custer from a hail of arrows.

ROAD TO NOWHERE

No Hoorays for Hollywood



Myst, featuring no one you've ever heard of

Is it worth hiring Hollywood talent to appear in computer games? The answer is yes and no. Yes, if they are right for the part and you can actually afford them. No if you're only doing it for the marketing angle. Why does marketing want big names? The same reason why Tom Cruise was chosen to play Lestat in *Interview With the Vampire*. The reasoning goes that if person A is a bigger star than B more people will want to see A. If A costs more than B, then you, the consumer, will end up paying more to see him or her.

Unfortunately, the high salaries cast a darker tone on the entire industry. Many companies are betting the farm on each release, which can result in rushed and buggy products, especially before the feeding frenzy known as Christmas and/or the quarterly earnings reports for the publicly held companies. The stars attract the mass-media and the non-gaming buying public, which is a good thing, but not if they end up getting shoddy product. Do not expect this process to change anytime in the near future.

Casting examples

Sierra hired Tim Curry to be the voice of Gabriel Knight. While he did do a very good job, you were asking an English actor to portray a Southerner. I'm sure there were some New Orleans natives who cringed at his accent. *Origin* hired Mark Hamill to play Blair in **Wing Commander III** so that the player would better identify with him based on Hamill being in *Star Wars*. OK, that's a given, but did we know who Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, and Carrie Fisher were when *Star Wars* came out? Did it matter? Did it stop you from wanting to be Luke Skywalker (I wanted to be Han Solo, since he was cooler)?

Who were the actors who did the voices for **Sam & Max Hit the Road**? I've never heard of any of them, yet they were perfect for their parts and no doubt selected for that very reason. Richard Sanders did the voice of Bernard in **Day of the Tentacle**, but he turned out to be perfect for the role. **Hell** is an example of both good and unnecessary casting. Dennis Hopper is a perfect choice to play a demon, but Stephanie Seymour, Grace Jones, and Geoffrey Holder are wasted in lesser roles.

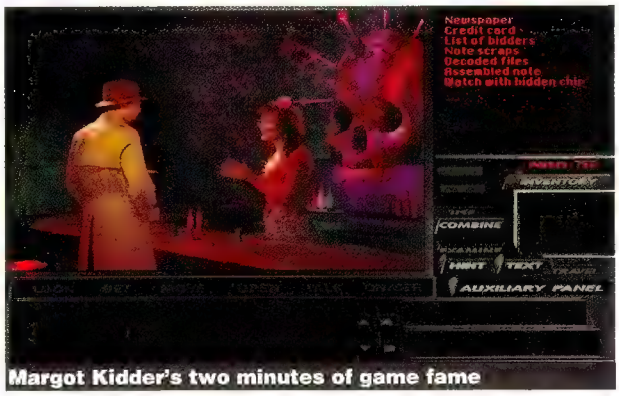
If you saw the ads for **Under a Killing Moon** you might expect Margot Kidder, Brian Keith, and Russell Means to appear on screen for more than the few minutes of screen time they actually have (Kidder must have about 10 lines in the whole game). **Myst** featured the designers in the starring roles, and it has outsold all of the other games talked about here. Could this possibly mean it's still the GAME that matters, not the star? Stay tuned.

These wacky sidebars

We have a new feature for this new column, and that is a pair of sidebars that give a list of the "Top 5" adventure and role-playing games. This list may change from month to month, depending on what is released. Before you start sending letter bombs and hate mail, something should be clarified. These are the top games you can actually go to a store and buy today. You may think **The Wizard and the Princess** was better than all of these other titles, but where can it be bought for the PC? Unlike the movie or music business, the gaming biz has no past, and no preservation society. Let us know if we're wrong. We like mail.

One interesting development for games archivists is the repackaging of older titles in CD-ROM bundles and/or with sequels. You too can see how good the original **Maniac Mansion** was by playing it within **Day of the Tentacle** (assuming you can deal with EGA graphics and **gasp** PC speaker sound). *Activision/Infocom* has re-released the **Zork** series as the **Zork Anthology**, which can be purchased separately or with **Return to Zork**. *Sierra* has released CDs containing all of the **King's Quest**, **Space Quest**, and **Leisure Suit Larry** games. You can get a bunch of the **Wizardry** games in a single bundle from *Sir-Tech*. *Origin* has their various **Ultima** bundles and *Activision/Infocom* has the most amazing set of the bunch, **The Lost Treasures of Infocom 1 & 2** (the first has 20 games!). *SSI* is apparently releasing a bunch of Gold Box CRPGS on one CD. All of these are great values, and there are some great games lurking in those boxes. Buy them. Preserve the history of your hobby.❑

Sam & Max Hit the Road - perfectly voiced?



Margot Kidder's two minutes of game fame

Top 5 CRPG

1. Ultima VII
2. Wizardry VII: Crusaders of the Dark Savant
3. Ultima Underworld 2
4. World of Xeen
5. Ultima Bundle (Ultima 1-VI)

Top 5 Adventures

1. Zork Series
2. Sam & Max Hit the Road
3. Day of the Tentacle
4. Myst
5. King's Quest Series

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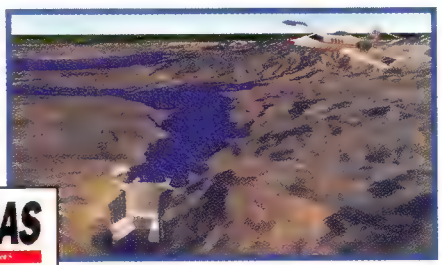

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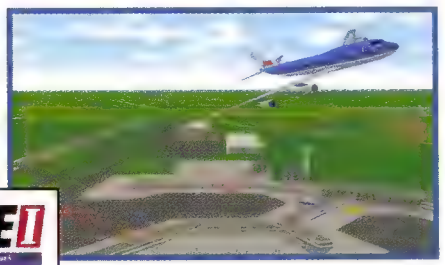

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MENZOBERRA

Unca answers some CRPG questions

HINTS & TIPS

Menzoberranzan is a hack-and-slash, role-playing adventure created by *Dreamforge* and published by *SSI*. Questions about playing the game are in italics.

I don't know how to get things out of sacks, scroll cases, etc.

To open a sack or scroll case, click on the portrait of a character, then place the object in a character's empty hand. To scribe a magic spell, pick up the parchment and click it on the Mage's spell book. To read a parchment, put the letter in a character's left hand, go back to the main screen and click on the parchment. If it is grayed out, give it to a different character. To look at the cross-section map an NPC gives you in the Underdark, click on the automap icon. The automap will have an icon of the new map in the lower right corner. The new map shows where you've been and will access the automaps you've already saved. Just click on the numbers.

My characters keep getting killed

There are a number of things you can do to make combat easier. Cast a few spells before venturing out (Protection , Armor and Prayer spells). Place armor pieces on your characters. Give them shields. Give them weapons they can use. When you have more than two characters, give the two in the rear ranks long range weapons (like halberds and bow and arrows). Swords and maces are unusable by characters in the rear ranks. If it's dark, cast a light spell. In combat, first cast your offensive spells (Magic Missile, Stinking Cloud, Aganazzar's Scorcher); then point your bloody-sword cursor at the monster and rapidly click away.

I don't know how to put out the warehouse fire in the village

There are fires burning on each side of the warehouse. Some of the fires are low, others high. You must put them all out before the Innkeeper gives you a magic helmet (later you'll find out it's the spider helm, and needs a jade spider added to it). Get a water bucket with water in it. There are several near the fire. There's a well to the north west of the fire, just east of the tavern. The building on fire is in the southeast corner of the village. Go to your inventory screen and put the water bucket in a character's hand. Go to the main screen; click on the bucket. You can put out as many four fires with one bucket of water. The secret is being far enough away to see all four fires. To fill a bucket, go close to the well; click on the bucket.

After putting out the fire, what do I do?

Go to the guardhouse and ask the guard (a good fighter) to join your party. Go to the Inn and get rewarded by the Innkeeper. He'll also give you information about what to do next. Search the camp for weapons, armor and scrolls (orange dots on the automap indicate where the objects are that you can pick). Go east to find the gate out of the village and go south. Talk to a wounded drow (he'll show up as a blue dot on your automap). Farther east from where you talk to him you can find a Centaur ranger who will join your party if asked. Go back to the village to rest and heal after using up magic spells. To the east of the village is Vermulean's Cottage. Vermulean tells you what to do next.

How do I get Drizzt to join my party?

For those who are unfamiliar with Salvatore's novels about Drizzt, he is a fighter with very high dexterity. He has some spell ability, and he also has a black panther that he can call into action by holding the figurine. You will want him to join your party. To find him go north to the cliff wall, and then follow the wall east to the Icewind Dale Plains. Along the way you will find his shelter. Enter and explore. There are some buttons to push on the walls, opening up more of the cave. Then exit and continue east to the wall, and turn south. Explore the little nooks and crannies along the way and Drizzt is likely to show up before you reach the Leucrotta's Lair. You do have the Centaur with you, and you have talked to the wounded drow south of the village, right? Make room for Drizzt by dismissing the Centaur.

Ther's a Gnice Gnoll.

This is a Troglodlyte. Kill it.

ANZAN

Just another pretty face.

I can't find the gems to give to the old guy

Go east, until you reach a wall. The Leucrotta's Lair is along the wall, just south of where you meet Drizzt. There are four gems inside. If you can't kill a Leucrotta, run by it and explore the cave, anyway. Pick up all the Jump Potions you find. You can use them to jump over stalagmites in the way. WARNING! There is a game bug that causes the Jump Potions you collect to disappear when you save a game inside the cave. Fortunately, there is another undocumented game feature (bug) that allows you to squeeze by the stalagmites. Turn the step mode on and off, while trying to squeeze by a stalagmite. Use the directional arrows to maneuver your party around them a step at a time. You should find a Helmet of Disguise and all four gems.

How do I use a Jump Potion?

Click on a character's ribbon to bring up the spell menu. Click on the letter "A." This will bring up a menu of the character's drow powers. Put the Jump Potion in the character's hand, and then click on the potion. This puts the Jump option temporarily in the drow power menu. Select Jump and click on the directional arrows. Clicking a Fly Potion causes a vertical, sliding lever to appear. Slide the lever up to levitate (the spell "levitate" produces the lever, too), and then click on the directional arrows.

What do I do with the four gems?

Return to Vermulean. He blesses the gems and identifies which one is the Winter Gem. Give one gem to each of the characters. Radiation in the Underdark poisons your characters unless they have a blessed gem. Drizzt doesn't need one. Drows are immune. Put your Cleric in the rear, and give him the Winter gem to use for casting cold spells. Contrary to popular belief, although the gems give your character's infrared vision, your characters must still cast light spells underground.

Where's the entrance to the Underdark?

Along the southern wall in the Icewind Dale Plains (Area One), there is an opening to the south that leads to the Icewind dale Plains (Area Two). Continue south into the plain, and then go east. Continue to the cliff wall, and turn south. Meet Vonar, another NPC, along the way. Ask Vonar to accompany you. Dismiss the fighter you picked up in the village. Vonar has some thief abilities you can use. He can fight in the rear, and cast a few spells, too. Continue south. In the southeast corner, along the south wall, find the entrance to the Underdark. Click on the mine car.

How do I get to the dwarven mines?

The railcar takes you to the northwest corner of level one. The lst ladder down to level two is southwest, almost in the southwest corner. Explore level one and collect all scrolls and potions you find, especially the "fly" and "passweb" kind. Save the northwest area for last. That's where the web blocks the way to ladder down to level two. Drink a Passweb Potion and pass through. The second ladder is in the northwest corner. There is a Barbarian with a map in the middle of the second level. Get the map. Work your way to the southwest corner of level two. Look for a secret door to the east. Then find a ladder back to level one in the southwest corner. Work your way back up to the northwest corner. Go through a secret door to the west, and find another web blocking the way. Use Passweb to go through and find the entrance to an underground lake in the northwest corner. Make sure you have your other fighter in the front rank protected with a Venom Immunity spell. Enter the area and kill the Abaleth (check to make sure no one has contracted Abaleth's Disease before saving). Pick up some useful Golden Armor and exit. In the southwest corner there's another web. Behind it are the stairs to the Dwarven Mines.

Unca will answer more questions about playing **Menzoberranzan** down the line.❑

What an inventory screen looks like.

Die again, Mortimer! Die again!

REVIEW

BLOWN AWAY

My solving-nerves frazzled, I present to you an intriguing experience for puzzle fans: **Blown Away.** A collaboration of *IVI Publishing, Inc., Imagination Pilots,* and *MGM,* the game is closely linked in plot and tone to the 1994 theatrical release of the same name. I thoroughly enjoyed the film, and with approximately the same apprehension I harbor about seeing-the-movie-after-reading-the-book, I dubiously appraised **BA.**

You are Jimmy Dove, a member of the Boston Bomb Squad, and an expert at the location and dismantling of bombs. Your nemesis, Justus, an Irish Machiavellian terrorist bomber from your past, still has a bone or two to pick with you. His intent is to blow up you and your family, friends and coworkers - nice guy - with devices he has strategically placed. Your mission is to find and dismantle all of these devices.

The "bombs" take the form of various types of challenges including word and number games, puzzles and mazes, strategy problems, hand-eye coordination (arcade style) sequences and other tests of your powers of observation and critical thinking. There is a wide range of difficulty, from the "I can't believe they included this wimpy puzzle" to the "No *way*" category. Most involve a race against the clock. When you beat the clock, you advance into another graphic scenario bringing you further through the story. When it beats you - combustion, techno-explosion, flames, the works!

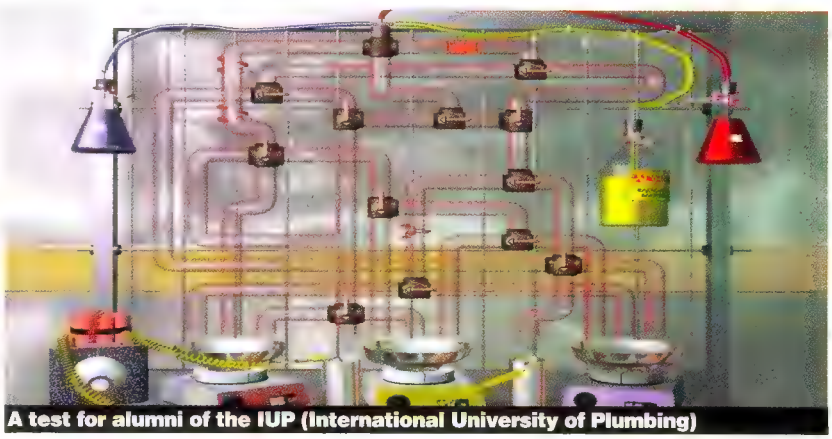
The puzzle parameters change substantially each time you play, so what may have taken you 30 seconds during one session might cause death and destruction during the next - a nice twist, since most puzzle games have but one solution to each puzzle for the life of the game. The game is a credit to the film, and the graphics and music during the realistic live-actor sequences are very impressive.

The ultimate object of the game is to move from the start to the finish in the fastest possible time, with a maximum achievable score of 1000. Deductions are made for hostages and games lost, elapsed time and wasted navigational effort. Awards are made for hostages saved, games completed and bonus clues discovered.

For those of you who like your puzzles hard, **BA** may not present as much of a challenge as you probably prefer. But families who solve together, fans of the film and most who are fond of the puzzle genre should have a blast.❑

Cindy Yans

Designed by: Imagination Pilots
Published by: IVI Publishing, Inc.
Systems: Windows CD-ROM



A test for alumni of the IUP (International University of Plumbing)

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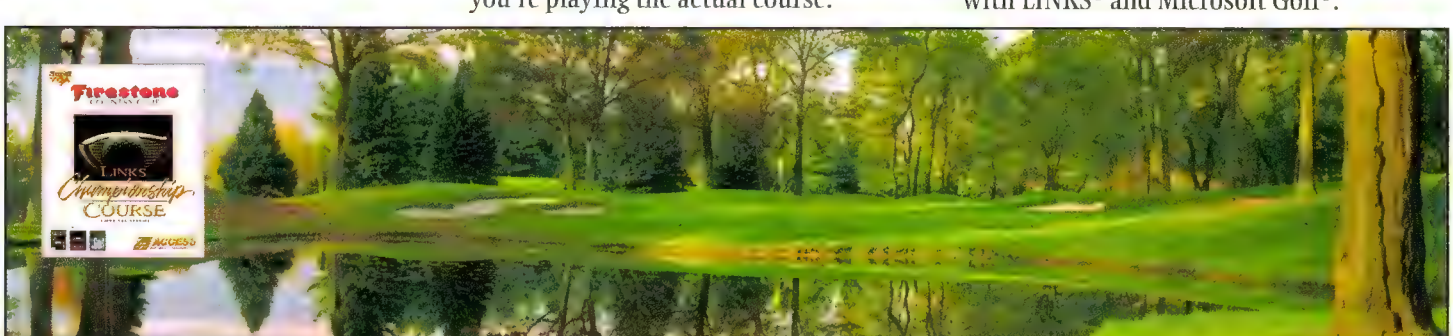

CYBERWAR

REVIEW

What do you do to follow up one of the most widely reviled games of 1993? You release a sequel, of course. A lot of people bought *SCI's* **The Lawnmower Man** based upon the promise of virtual reality coupled with the 256 color artwork on the box. Once they loaded the game they were faced with horrid 32 color artwork (the boxes were later recalled and a "32 color version" sticker was added) and incredibly shallow gameplay. Responding to the criticisms of the first game, *SCI* have improved the sequel **Cyberwar** in every respect. There's more variety, more challenge, better graphics (in full 256 colors), more gameplay, and more CD's worth of data (3 vs. 1, with an extra audio CD to boot).

You are condemned to sequel hell

The sequel has Dr. Lawrence Angelo once again entering cyberspace to battle Cyberjobe, the virtual being he created in the movie version of *The Lawnmower Man*. This time Cyberjobe has become even more psychotic and roams the computers of VSI. You will need to penetrate the military defense network of VSI's computers to locate and destroy the Omega Chip. This chip is the heart of Cyberjobe's Virtual City and gives him control of the entire Information Superhighway. Only you can derail his plans for world domination.

The actual gameplay hasn't changed much, and therein lies the problem with **Cyberwar** and other games of its ilk. They are just fancy versions of **Dragon's Lair**, where you occasionally respond to what's happening on the screen and then you watch a fancy animation that leads to the next little test of your reflexes. You have a fairly large variety of tasks to complete to get to the end of the game, some of which are puzzles (which have ridiculously low time requirements to complete) and some that just require quick reflexes (the toad turns right, so quickly press the right button). Many of the puzzles are rather tedious, and feature a large number of pauses while a fancy non-interactive animation plays. There is an absurd limit of two saved games per CD, and you only get one chance at each level: if you fail you get to start it over.

Comparing **Cyberwar** to the original **Lawnmower Man** you can't help but come to the conclusion that this is a considerably better game. The program seems bug-free and the game features the worlds most stylish and beautifully designed packaging. Unfortunately it's still a better series of *Silicon Graphics* demos than a game, but people who enjoy that whole **Dragon's Lair** genre will find that **Cyberwar** is definitely worth checking out.❑

Steve Bauman

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Systems: PC CD-ROM

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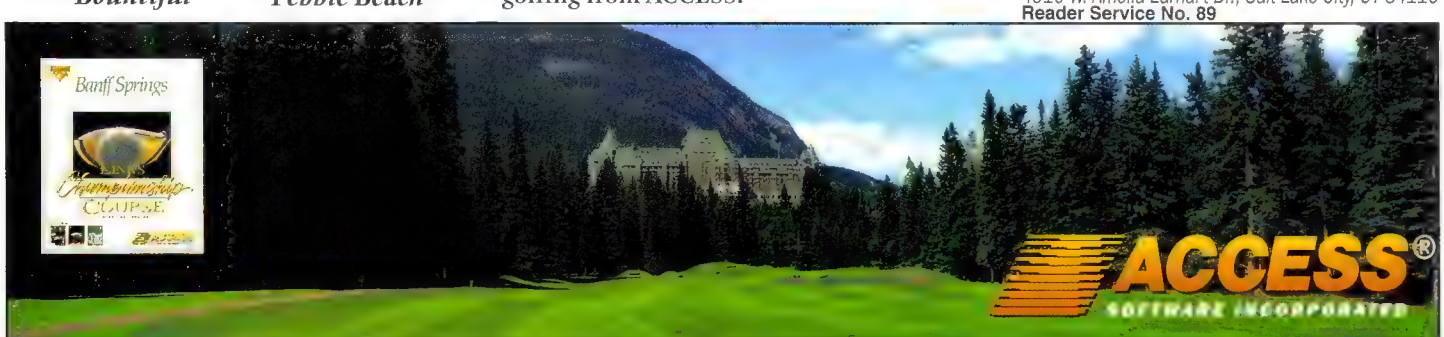

HELL: A CYBERPUNK THRILLER

REVIEW

There have been few hell-based game releases for the PC. While we may never see a game version of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, we have had a few hellish games like **Escape from Hell**, a tongue-in-cheek CRPG that was notable for offending *PC Magazine's* John Dvorak. I wonder what Dvorak will think of *Take 2 Interactive's* **Hell: A Cyberpunk Thriller**? This game brings hell to Washington D.C. (a match made in, uh, hell) and features nudity, violence, Dennis Hopper, bad language, and a bad attitude. Unfortunately, **Hell** turns out to be all attitude, with little content.

Designed by: Take 2 Interactive Software
Distributed by: GameTek
Systems: PC CD-ROM
Requirements: 386sx/33 or higher, 20 MB of free disk space,
Graphics: 256 color VESA compatible SVGA
Supports: Soundblaster and compatibles, Roland, AWE32
Copy Protection: None

A helluva plot

The world of **Hell** takes place in the year 2095. Washington D.C. is not only the capital but hell has sprung up in the town. Hellspawn walk the streets, dragging sinners to Hades. The country is ruled by a political party called the Hand of God (a not-so subtle jab at the Religious Right) and its leader, the Imperator Solene Solux. The population is fed up with violence, immorality, and burdened with runaway technology (hmm...) so they allow Solux to take complete control. Solux outlaws new technologies, free speech, books, rival political parties, alcohol and drugs, and gambling.

You control either Gideon Eshanti or Rachel Braque, who were Artificial Reality Containment agents and whose job was to gather information on illegal technologies. Suddenly you find out that the Hand of God has slated you for termination (via an automatic weapon-filled wake-up call) and it's up to you to find out why you are the bad guys. You travel from location to location in typical adventure game fashion and talk to loads of people for a long time, amassing the information that will open up new areas to visit, allowing you to talk to even more people.

It's hard to point the finger at what is really bad about **Hell**. Is it the flat and uninspired voice acting, especially by the leads? Dennis Hopper handles his lines much better than everyone else, though it often sounds like someone is writing dialogue for Dennis Hopper, not his character Mr. Beautiful. Geoffrey Holder's scenes are especially funny because you see his forehead, eyes, and nose, but not his mouth. It's blocked by some apparatus, which alleviated the need to actually record any video of him speaking. Supermodel Stephanie Seymour is digitized (as opposed to being turned into a cyberactor like everyone else), and God only knows what her speech is supposed to be synched with (perhaps her biorhythm, because it ain't her mouth). The end result is that she looks beautifully out of place.

Is it the endlessly boring and comically bad dialogue that stoops to Beavis & Butthead-isms for shock value? The movie *Pulp Fiction* suggests that swearing can turn into high art in the right hands, but in most peoples' it just looks puerile and out of place. Is it the fact that each character says their piece, then switches to the other, with no overlapping dialogue? Is it the rendered cyberactors, who use a single repeating animation for discussions, so you may be talking to someone who is constantly drinking a beverage, yet they talk right through each drink? Is it the completely non-interactive combat (if you have certain weapons or objects entering the fight you win, and if you don't you lose—big whoop)?

A helluva lot of promise

Hell had so much promise. The background art, looking like an SVGA version of **Bloodnet**, is uniformly superb, probably some of the finest seen in any game to date. The music is also excellent and the overall premise is quite good. As an adventure it's quite long (due in part to the long conversations) and there are also a lot of locations to explore. Ultimately, however, the game is just boring to play. All of the criticisms of the acting are important, because that's what you spend probably 75% of the game doing, watching and listening to people act. The rest of the time you run errands for characters or solve little word puzzles in order to get passwords for the various computers you will run into.

I'm not sure where **Hell** went wrong. I liked **Bloodnet**, and this is a very similar game (though *that* game actually had combat). With all of the hype I expected a helluva lot more than this. Playing **Hell** turned into a chore, and I kept hoping it would suddenly get better. It didn't. Oh well, maybe next time.❑

Steve Bauman

That's a helluva set of choppers you have there, bud

Holidays in the sun

PHOENIX

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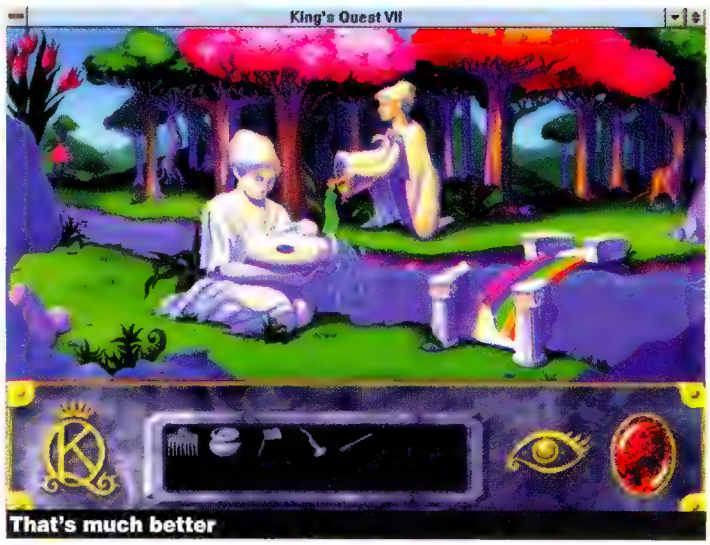

KING'S QUEST VII

Andy Backer gets players thru Sierra's cartoon adventure

Chapter One (Valanice)

Pick up torn petticoat and stick . Get hunting horn two screens south of starting screen, return north, explore. Pick up basket in cave (get corn kernel inside basket) and clay jar (one of four, first three will break). Get salt crystals by pool. Plant kernel under dripping water. Take seed from gourd. Blow hunting horn in Jackalope's hole to get Kangaroo Rat's glasses, Jackalope's fur. Give glasses to Rat in Rare Curiosities shop. Trade gourd seed for turquoise bead. To drain pool, turn statue's head. Line up all three beads in second column from right on statue's neck. Move statue's right arm by touching wrist band. Go down steps of empty pool, put turquoise bead in tray, take one turquoise arrow piece. Go west two screens, one north. Use stick to get prickly pear from cactus. Use petticoat on stick to make flag. Use flag to get by scorpion in cave. Examine statue. Press center symbol on side. Place blue marble on one hand of statue. Place yellow marble on other hand. Place red marble on pedestal to right and behind statue. Take second turquoise arrow piece. Put it together with other. Place whole piece in arrow slot of doorway by prickly pear cactus. Enter open door, meet monster.

Chapter Two (Rosella)

Pick up toy rat and shield in throne room, talk to Mathilda (she'll list ingredients Rosella needs to turn back to human). Go to mud pool, talk to trolls, return to throne room. Exit upper right to kitchen. After being thrown out, return to mud pool, talk to lady trolls about sleeping aids. Return to kitchen, use toy rat on Cook. In kitchen, get golden bowl from bottom shelf. Get baked beetles by using machine to right of shelves. Back in throne room, take lower left exit to workshop. Talk to both trolls. Take lantern, go further down. Fill bowl with green water. Walk to lower edge of crevasse, jump to center island to get wet sulfur. Go to workshop, put sulfur in fire to make troll sleep. Use tongs (on wall) to get brown box and dip in water bucket. Silver spoon is inside. Use bellows to make fire hot, use lantern on fire to get spark. Go to throne room, exit lower right. Try to cross bridge. Go to broken cart. Examine shield, separating shield from spike. Put shield on cart in place of missing wheel. Use spike to secure shield. Ride cart past bridge guard. Talk to dragon. Give him spark (lantern). Take gem, go back to workshop. Exchange gem for troll's hammer and chisel. Use hammer and chisel on dragon's tail just after it flops. Get dragon scale, return to Mathilda. Give her bowl with green water first, then beetles, spoon, and scale. After being turned back to human, and Malicia imprisons you in bedroom, pile furniture under portrait, remove it and crawl through. Overhear plotting, fall and get Dragon Toad. Go to bedroom, hear argument, give Dragon Toad to Mathilda, get enchanted rope. Try to exit lower right, use toy rat on Malicia, then exit lower right again. Use rope on elevator. Use elevator.

Chapter Three (Valanice)

Feed monster prickly pear. Talk to stag about Lord Feldspar. Cross mud bed by jumping rocks. Use basket on spider. Talk to bird. Enter small door at city gate. Cry for archduke (use golden comb on self). Talk to Fernando in China Shop about lost bird. Go past pool and Faux Shop door. Remove cover from bird cage, open door , take bird to Fernando to get china mask. Wear mask , go to birthday party. Exit through curtain in rear. Go down stairway to left, continue to door. Try to enter powder room twice. Exit powder room through third mirror. Open drawer on side of desk to get magic

statuette. Go back to party, exit. Go to pond. Sky should fall and mocking bird leave nest. Take wooden nickel from nest. Eat a grain of salt, enter Faux Shop. Exchange mask for rubber chicken. Exchange nickel for book. Go back to Curiosity Shop in desert, exchange book for crook. On way back to city gate look at flowers. Use clay pot on flowers to get heavenly nectar. In town, use crook to fish cheese (moon) out of pond.

Chapter Four (Rosella)

Grab shovel blade, be pulled to safety. Talk to gravedigger about his rat (Iggy) three times. Go southeast, west, and east. Climb rope (don't touch web). Inside Jack-o-lantern get backbone, and foot-in-a-bag. Go to Doctor Cadaver, exchange backbone for weird pet. Go east, show and give weird pet to brats to get Iggy. Give Iggy to gravedigger, get horn. Go southeast , use hammer and chisel on coffin to rescue cat, get extra life. Go back to gravedigger, get shovel. Go west, south and south again. Stand at extreme lower left of screen, use horn. Stand more to right if Bogie man (not gravedigger) comes. Enter hole, examine lock. Select skull, bat and spider to open lock. Give Dragon Toad to king. Use hammer and chisel on king's armband. Take black robe, wear it (you should now have magic wand and scarab-king). Go to Dr. Cadaver, get defoliant.

Go east, scare brats, go south into garden. Defoliate green monster, approach flytrap. Use foot-in-a-bag on fly-trap, take red flower. Go east past Malicia's house, then north. Remove green vine covering hole, use shovel to enlarge hole. If you hear dog barking, go back to path in front of house, go east to forest. Return to hole in back of house. If dog is no longer barking, enter hole. Enter room, but go below floorboard immediately. Spray defoliant on dog when he sticks his nose in knot-hole. Re-enter room, get mysterious device from third chest of drawers. Return pile of clothing to drawer, take woolen stocking. Exit through floorboard, wear cloak, return to path, go east. Make sling out of silver pellet and woolen stocking to shoot were-bear. Return to powder room in town hall (see Chapter Three). Polish plaque on statue with woolen stocking to read it. Get golden grapes from pillar with hammer and chisel. Feed statue grape to open entrance part way. Move to left of room, use magic wand on scarab. Return magic wand to inventory, follow Troll King through entrance.

Chapter Five (Valanice)

Make slingshot of rubber chicken and tree by pond, shoot moon (cheese), get feather. Exchange statuette for snake's were-beast salve, leave town. Go east three times, use feather on snoring rock, go to statues. Pour nectar in vase. Join Jackalope fur and salve and use mixture on self. Go west and beat up were-beast. Continue west past Jack -o'-lantern to Cadaver's house, then go east and climb rope. Take femur bone from mummy. Leave, go west, west and north. Give femur to dog. Talk to dog and get medal. Go south, give medal to crying woman. Go east, east and get firecracker. Go back to crypt and put firecracker in lock. Enter crypt, open statue, get skull. Leave and stand on path. Give skull to horseman (end up in Etheria with fife). Go east, east and climb mountain. Climb strange tree and get ambrosia. Leave mountain and go south, then west. Slide down southeast rainbow. Go to heavenly statues and put ambrosia in cornucopia, get pomegranate. Put pomegranate on bleeding tree. Blow fife and return to Etheria. Go east, then north. Pluck 1st, 5th, 6th and 4th string to activate globe on harp. Use globe and talk to fates, go talk to Ceres, and come back. Fates will send you (slide down southwest rainbow) to Malicia's house to get crystal shaft (lamp at right of room). If dog barks, go back to front of house and go east and then return. When you have shaft, blow fife and slide down northwest rainbow to get to desert. Go north, north, east and enter building. Place shaft on statue to energize it. Leave, blow fife, return to fates. They will give you dream catcher and send you to weaver of dreams in cave at top of mountain in Etheria (use dream catcher to catch nightmare at opening of cave, then use dream catcher on dream weaver to get tapestry of dreams). Ride tapestry to dreamland, use dream catcher on black nightmare, go south, enter building, use crystal shaft on ice and get magic bridle. Climb mountain and stand behind cave to catch white wind with bridle.

Chapter Six (Rosella)

Examine magic wand. Click bottom control. Use the Wand set to "F" on false king (thrown to back of room). In volcano use shovel on self. Go northwest, open door by pressing left, right eye, nose. Use mysterious device on socket at right of back control panel to charge it. When it blinks take it back. Use fragrant flower on king to stop volcano. Use device on Malicia. Use extra life on Edgar.❑

ALONE IN THE DARK 3

REVIEW

Those wacky French folks at *Infogrames* have released the third version of their battling blockheads action/adventures, this one shockingly called **Alone in the Dark 3** (**AITD3**), but with the very clever **A Fistful of Horrors** subtitle. As the subtitle would imply, this one features a western motif, but if the Italians can do it and actually make it work, so can the French. They will, however, lose out on bad dubbing (of course I'm working with the French version of the game, so everyone says tough Western sort of things in French) and lots of long stares between ugly, sweating men with cigars in their mouths. God, I loved those spaghetti westerns (these are films, not games, so quit looking in your closet for that Italian spaghetti game - or wait for **Pizza Tycoon**).

No, this is not a DOOM outtake

Hartwood does Hollywood

Emily Hartwood, the heroine in the first **AITD** game, is one of those people who are deluded into thinking that Hollywood is some magical place. She kicks around town (probably as a waitress) before landing a job as a script girl on a new western. This film – *The Last Ranger* — is being filmed at Slaughter Gulch, a ghost town (of course) in the Mojave desert. One night, her horse returns without her, with the words "Call Carnby" scrawled on the saddle.

You will once again don the adventuring garb of Edward Carnby as you travel to the ghost town to find out what has happened to Emily. Upon arriving in Slaughter Gulch you are approached by the welcoming committee, who promptly blow up the bridge that was the only means of exiting the town. You will have to find certain artifacts and battle all sorts of nasty ghosts to try and solve the mysteries of Slaughter Gulch. After dealing with Lovecraftian mythology and voodoo you'd think old Eddie would be sick of the supernatural. Nope; now he gets to deal with the magic of the Native Americans, but they are his allies, not his foe. It seems that the founder of the town, one Jedediah Stone, had stolen the land from the Navajo, who called this sacred ground the "Field of Braves." Didn't these guys see *Poltergeist*? Never build things on sacred burial grounds.

The keyboard-only controls for **AITD3** are identical to the two previous entries in the series. The <Enter> key accesses the inventory and allows you to manipulate the objects and select weapons, while the space bar plus the numeric keypad uses the various objects you may find, from guns to lighters. The graphics are in the same style as the predecessors (lots of subdued colors), the sound is very well done, and the perspectives in each scene are downright bizarre.

There are a few new wrinkles to the **AITD** engine. You can now choose the game difficulty before you start, which will determine how many life points you have, how much ammunition you'll find, and the strength of all of the bad guys. The game is larger, with over 270 backgrounds and 60 characters, and the animation speed has been improved. You can even die in the game and be reincarnated as a cougar.

Wait until you see the next one

The overall presentation of the game really cannot be faulted. The graphics are a bit drab, but the sound and the well-done CD-audio soundtrack are worth checking out, the whole concept of the old west and ghost towns is worth digging back up, and the game does manage to maintain an overall sense of gloom. However, like the previous games, you will find yourself dying a lot, too much in fact, which causes more frustration than anything.

The biggest problem with **Alone in the Dark 3** is that the competition has passed it up, making it look a bit on the old-fashioned side. If you look at *Electronic Arts'* excellent **Relentless : Twinsen's Adventure** and especially *Psygnosis'* **Ecstatica** you will find much better graphics and sound, and enough twists on the formula to make them seem fresh. What made the game original has become old hat, but if you were a fan of the first two games, there's nothing here that would turn you against the series. It's another solid, if unspectacular, effort.❑

Steve Bauman

Designed by: Infogrames
Published by: I-Motion
Systems: IBM PC CD-ROM
Requirements: 386DX-33 or higher, 4 MB RAM, 14 MB of hard disk space
Graphics: 256 color VGA
Sound Support: Sound Blaster and compatibles
Copy Protection: None

Je suis une pamplem ousse

Est-il un blockhead avec une Winchester?

ZIG ZAG

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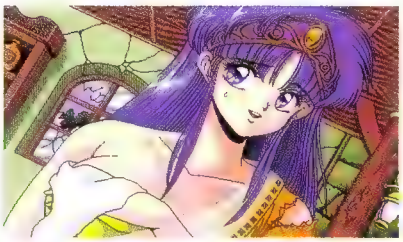
REVIEW

KNIGHTS OF XENTAR



The Japanese style of animation known as Anime has quite a following among adolescent males here in the U.S. Its distinguishing features are a simplicity of form and style, coupled with odd hair colors, big eyes, and women with gravity defying breasts with eternally erect nipples. *Megatech* has carved out a niche as the purveyors of this peculiar art-form, but their initial releases have been a mixed bag. **Cobra Mission** was a hilariously stupid adults-only adventure game, while **Metal & Lace: The Battle of the Robo-Babes** (the all-time stupid game title) didn't really work, because as a fighting game it was lame.

Their latest release is another Japanese import called **Knights of Xentar**, which looks to have the same sort of appeal that **Cobra Mission** had, though it is mostly devoid of the adult elements (though you can send away for the adult NR-18 version if you send proof of age to *Megatech*). Role-playing purists may scoff at such an offering, but **Xentar** is really the game that they have been asking for, one that eschews the trend toward first-person arcade action. It's old-fashioned, but in the end it actually works.

Plot?

The plot is, well, there's really no clue what the actual plot is for the game, since the introduction is a seemingly random series of screenshots accompanied by dialogue that makes about as much sense as most reviewers do writing articles at 3:00 A.M. on a caffeineated high. There's some mention of a hero named Desmond, some Knights of Xentar who are supposed to rescue the fair maidens of Strawberry Fields (huh?), a stolen sword, and a set of family jewels (quit giggling). You start the game naked (hmm) after you get mugged and the first thing you'll have to secure are weapons and armor. After that you will receive a number of not-so subtle clues about what you have to do next.

The funniest thing about **Xentar** is that at this point it turns out to be a traditional multi-character role-playing game, albeit one from 1989 or so. You play from an overhead perspective of your characters and move from square to square in true early **Ultima** style. You even have multiple world views, so when you leave town you go to a world view. Your character has all of the usual stats, and experience points are given for defeating monsters. As you get more experience points your level increases, and so do your stats and hit-points.

Odd combat

The combat is handled rather oddly, as it initially looks non-interactive. When you are attacked, the game switches to a side view and you start to attack the beast(s). You can choose an attack strategy, such as more offensive and less defense, and you can choose the order that you attack multiple nasties. Magic spells are available, as are healing potions. The bestiary is rather interesting, featuring such staples as slime, the dreaded battle bee, killer dogs, giant clams, evil elephants, and the requisite orc. On the downside, the game has completely random encounters, which makes it rather monotonous when you travel long distances outside of the towns. Walk a few steps, combat, walk a few more, more combat, etc.

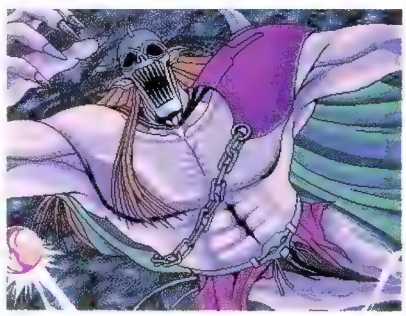
All towns are full of people to talk to, most of whom have no information to offer. The CD version of the game includes full speech, and really adds to the cheesy atmosphere. The voices are quite funny and over-the-top, which I'm sure was the point (your character's voice is a dead-ringer for Milhouse from *The Simpsons*). You will also find the usual complement of inns (for replenishing hit points) and shops where you can buy and sell weapons, armor, and potions.

Is it art?

Though I am in no way a hardcore Anime fan, the artwork in **Xentar** is quite good, at least the close-ups (especially considering they are using 16 colors). I won't even begin to understand the appeal of these tiny, cutesy little characters that make up your on-screen persona (it's a *Hello Kitty* thing, I guess). It makes the game look like a *Nintendo* CRPG rather than a computer one.

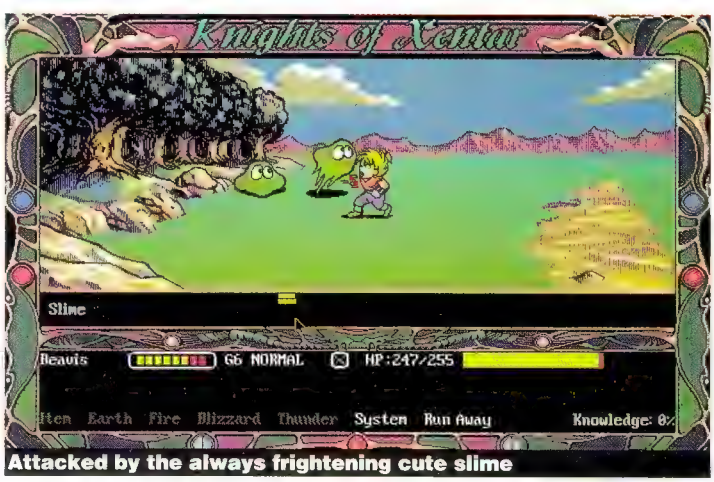
In the end, **Knights of Xentar**, like **Cobra Mission**, is an acquired taste. Both games are hilarious, though I'm not 100% sure they are intended that way. They are both so bad they enter a whole new realm of badness, where bad becomes good. They are low-art, in bad taste, and quite a bit of fun. Playing **Xentar** you get the same feeling you do turning on late night TV to discover a truly horrid movie playing (such as anything directed by Ed Wood). There's some sort of perverse fascination with the weird that keeps you watching until the final credits roll, and that is exactly what keeps you in front of this game.❑

Steve Bauman



Designed by: Shigeru Mabuchi
Distributed by: Megatech
Systems: PC CD-ROM, floppy
Requirements: 386 or faster
Graphics: High resolution VGA
Sound support: Soundblaster and compatibles
Copy Protection: None on CD, code wheel for floppy

This town could be filled with half-naked women



Attacked by the always frightening cute slime

DRAGON LORE

While **Dragon Lore** is better as a whole than most adventure games out right now, and its background graphics are spectacular (even more breathtaking than **Myst**), the animations are of wooden characters with vacant eyes and frozen expressions. Worse, the characters' lips continue to move after lines are spoken (as in a badly dubbed movie).

Some games may get away with lifeless characters when they are rendered in such a bizarre fashion that the gamer does not expect much reality. **Alone in the Dark** fits into this category. **DL**, however, in attempting to be more realistic than **AitD** draws attention to the potential limitations of such an approach.

Puzzle adventure

Although it is primarily a puzzle-adventure, **DL** has some of the qualities of a single-character CRPG. Werner, the player character, has some changing statistics. When he engages in combat, he may lose life points and even die. There are healing potions and NPCs with healing powers, fortunately. Werner can cast spells (after he finds a spell book and spell pages), but uses up mana he only regains after time passes. There is a balance scale (horizontal bar graph) keeping track of his propensity to solve puzzles violently or with wisdom.

The aim of the game

Werner's objective is to become the fourteenth Dragon Knight and wear the Knight's ring he inherited from his dead father. He needs a simple majority of the twelve living Knights to vote for him. Half of them prefer recruits who are prone to violence, while others like them wise. How you play the game determines how the knights will vote on you.

All movements are mouse driven. An animated dragon-cursor points in the directions Werner may travel. The dragon points out objects that can be picked up, looked at more closely or triggered by another object. Shove the cursor to the left hand corner and an inventory (and statistic) screen drops down.

The puzzles — as with most adventure games — are linear. Werner often has to track down objects he needs to pass an obstacle. They're seldom in the same room, but he can't wander wherever he'd like, either. There are paths to follow between obstacles, and the game doesn't allow Werner to explore much more than a step or two off of the paths. A disconcerting puzzle at the beginning of the game doesn't allow Werner to enter his own house until after his foster father has gone inside. There are two schools of thought on puzzle design in adventures; if you like adventures which leave you little room for wandering around aimlessly, **DL** is just the ticket. If you like lots of wandering, look elsewhere (perhaps at **Lords of Midnight** when it shows).

Difficult puzzles

On the first disk, the puzzles are mostly of the simple try-to-get-past-an-obstacle-and-go-elsewhere-to-find-the-means variety. The obstacle is often a locked door for which Werner must find a key. Sometimes, he has to kill someone (or something), but not often. The second disk has the more challenging (sometimes frustrating) puzzles. This is not a puzzle-adventure for novices, because the puzzles range from easy to nearly impossible.

The plot is simple and there's little character development, but the puzzles are addicting and the world is fun to explore. Even when the game ends, the player can still go back and re-explore. One **DL** player wrote and indicated that he had done just that. "I got bored [after finishing the game] and went back and ravaged the countryside, killing everyone (dogs, foster dad, all the dragon knights and George and whatever the other guy's name was). I guess I own everything now, since there are no living beings left in the land."

Bottom lines

DL is a very good game. It is addictive, has mouth-watering graphics and above average puzzles. However, If you have a limited budget and only want to buy the greatest adventure games of the year, **DL** is only near great. *Mindscape* needs to pay more attention to story development if the company wants to create masterpieces. **DL** has an average plot with no character development joined to superior graphics and an above-average range of puzzles.

Too many adventure games this year have just been puzzle-adventures with outstanding graphics and weak (or no) story lines. Games like **Under a Killing Moon** and **Dragon Lore** are outstanding graphic adventures, but suffer from weak writing. Even **King's Quest VII** doesn't have the charm and wit of **King's Quest VI**.

Technology alone does not a great game make. Great games need good writers who create intriguing, imaginative puzzles and integrate them into intriguing, imaginative stories with interesting, believable characters who we care about and who *change* during the course of the game. Let's have more story, please!❑

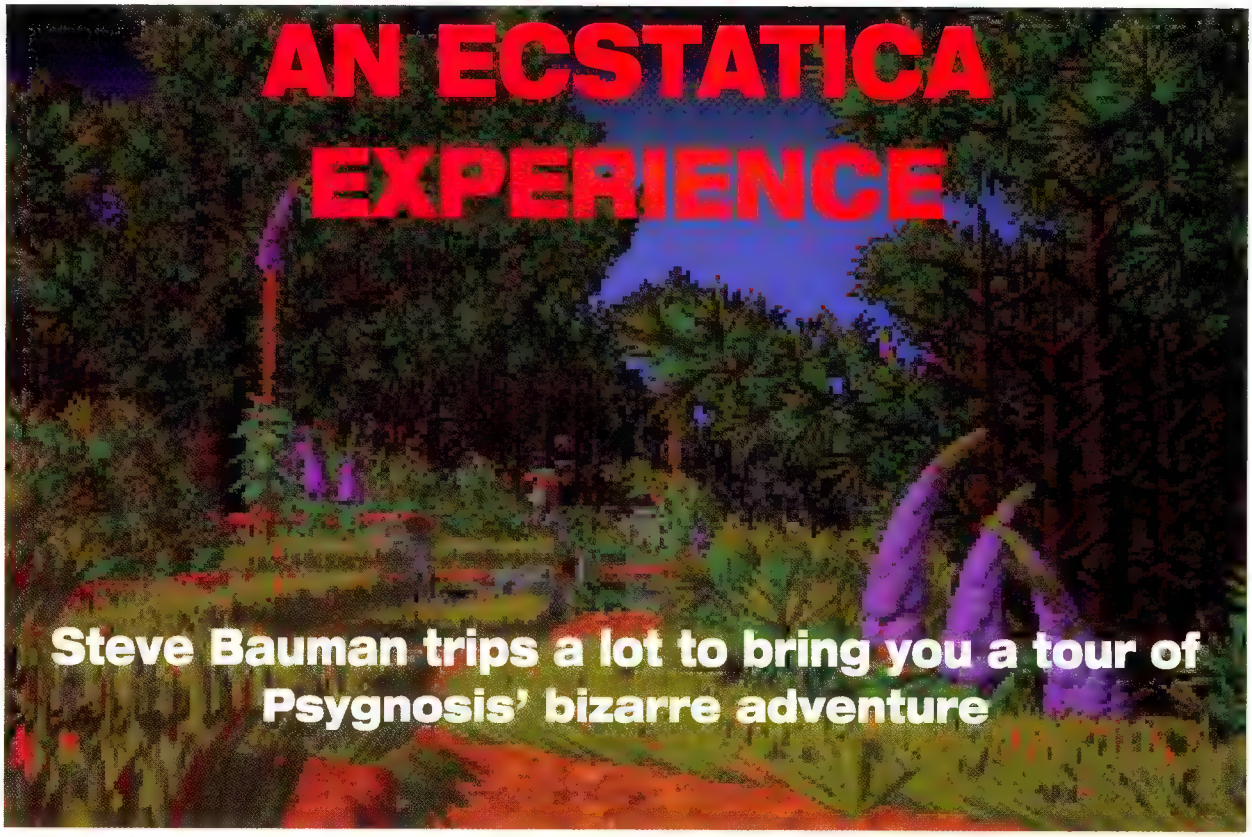
Andy Backer

Designed by: Fabrice Bernard
Published by: Mindscape
Systems: IBM PC CD-ROM
Graphics: 256 Color VGA
Sound: Soundblaster and compatibles
Supports: Mouse, keyboard

You mean I gotta work in this game?

Your path is blocked by a giant fuzzy thing

AN ECSTATICA EXPERIENCE



Steve Bauman trips a lot to bring you a tour of Psygnosis' bizarre adventure

Ecstatica is an immensely entertaining game, one that will keep a grin on your face for many hours after completion. You could conceivably solve the game in a matter of hours; however, you may miss some of the fun by not going around the wrong corner and seeing one of the game's many dead-ends. There are situations that you can stumble into that produce hilarious results, so don't be afraid to poke around. You can be attacked by furniture, experience the world as a frog, get carried around by a bird, fly on a broom, and meet new and unusual naked people. If anyone finds out what to do at the fountain with the urinating statue, please let me know. The statue occasionally scratches its back with its arrows, but I wasn't able to do anything with it (not that I wanted to, mind you).

There are a few extremely important things to keep in mind when playing **Ecstatica**. One is that you can choose to do most of the things in this walkthrough in any order, as it's a fairly non-linear game. Another is that you should swallow your pride and run like hell from most of the characters that attack you. There are a couple of characters that you cannot defeat until much later in the game, though you can hold them at bay by punching them and turning tail. Most importantly, this game is proof positive that the saved game is the adventurer's best friend, as you will die in this game. Repeatedly.

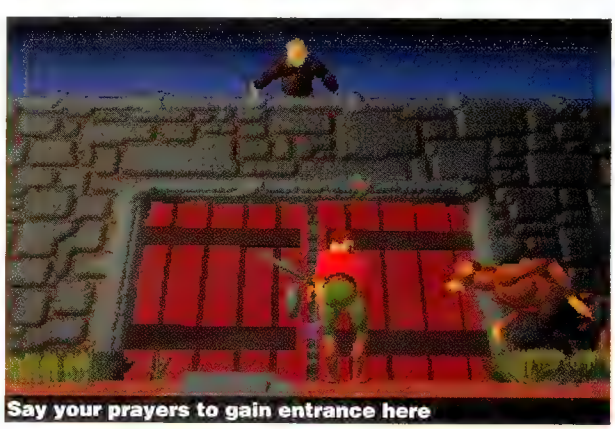
Flatulent bear?

When you start the game you are dumped at the entrance to the town. Immediately start running, hugging the left side of the buildings. You might want to run over and grab the sword, though I'm not sure how much it helps you , but it certainly doesn't hurt. There is armor here, but DO NOT TAKE IT. It's a red herring, and if you do put it on, you move at half-speed and if you trip (which you do quite often - you are quite the klutz) you are history, because you can't get back up.

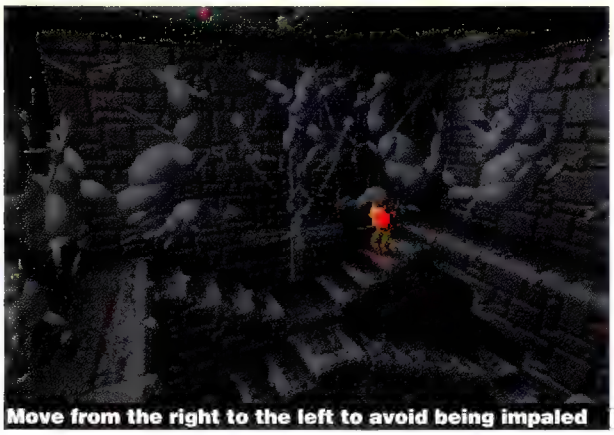
Go to Mr. Flatulence (AKA the drunk bear, and you'll know why he's called both things if you hang around a bit) and sneak by him, staying as close to the left wall as possible (he can't hit you there). Upstairs you will find a book, and reading it will give you an idea of what's going on in this weird place. Pick up the teddy bear that's sitting on the bed and return it to the small girl in the stable, which will trigger an animation where she says to follow her. Do so. Well, you can't quite follow her everywhere because you're too big, so go back to the third floor above Mr. Flatulence and find the instructions for the magic piglet potion.

Now it's time to find the piglet ingredients. The green herb-like thing can be found in the store that was just to your right when you first entered the town. In order to get it, though, make sure to go to the bar and rescue the old man. You'll carry him to a room and he will tell you

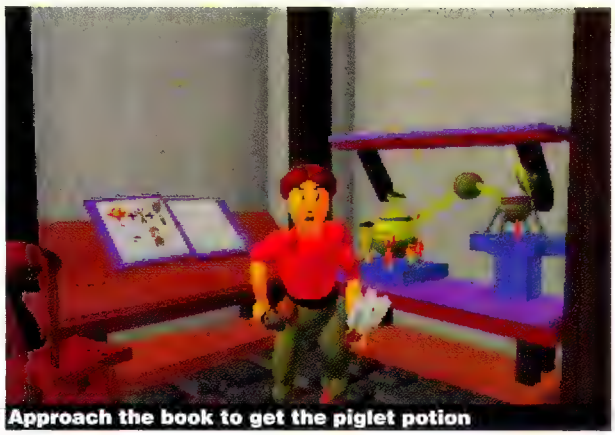
My Dinner with Andre the Demon



Say your prayers to gain entrance here



Move from the right to the left to avoid being impaled



Approach the book to get the piglet potion

a story. You can grab the herb there after he finishes blabbering away. Next you will need a thing that looks sort of like a gingerbread man. That can be found under the hanging priest. The last ingredient, the flower, can be found out in the forest near the monk's hideout. Grab all of these things (one at a time) and return them to the potion room.

Piglet man

Now you're one ugly little bugger. Go to the dungeon and enter the room where the little girl went. Avoid the piglets for now, and just run down the hallway past them (run, in piglet terms, means to repeatedly attack, as you jump forward quicker than normal walking). When you get into one room you will return to your normal height and can pound on those little piglets.

Go upstairs here and you'll find a cowardly knight. If you approach him he should drop his sword. That is the sword that the drunk guy you rescued in the bar was babbling about. Take it and stand on the stone outside of the lake in the forest. The lady of the lake will knight you and off you go. You can now enter the wizard's castle. There is a book in the tower that tells you what to do next. You need a magic book plus a relic, which will give you a new weapon of great power.

Monk hunter

The relic is in the monk's hideout, but they won't let you in because they think you're a creature. But they would listen to a holy man, so go to the room with the hanging priest and take the bible on the floor. Take that to the monk's entrance; after reading from it they will let you in. Once there, you will notice them worshipping the relic (the thing that looks like a bone). If you take it, they will all attack you, but you can do two things here - kill them all (they are wimps, and indiscriminate killing doesn't seem to have any negative effect on your character or the ending) or grab the item and run away to another room in the monk's castle and fall down a hole. A guy seems to chop you in half, but hangs you from a cross that you can escape from.

The book is downstairs in the wizard's castle. When you go down you'll be confronted by a statue that attacks you. You can try sneaking by and if successful will be faced with a fight against two invisible things. I defeated them, but others have told me you can sneak by them too. The next room features some spikes that occasionally impale you, but it seems that approaching it from the right side and moving to the left will get you by most of the time (the opposite is true for leaving).

Once downstairs there's a real suit of armor you can take in the center room. The magic book is down here too, as are a few, um, interesting rooms, one with naked men and half-naked women, another with a bunch of nude impaled torsos, and yet another where you can fight yourself (shades of **Prince of Persia**). If you kill yourself (you can only do it with the supercharged relic) it will open up another door to the endgame room.

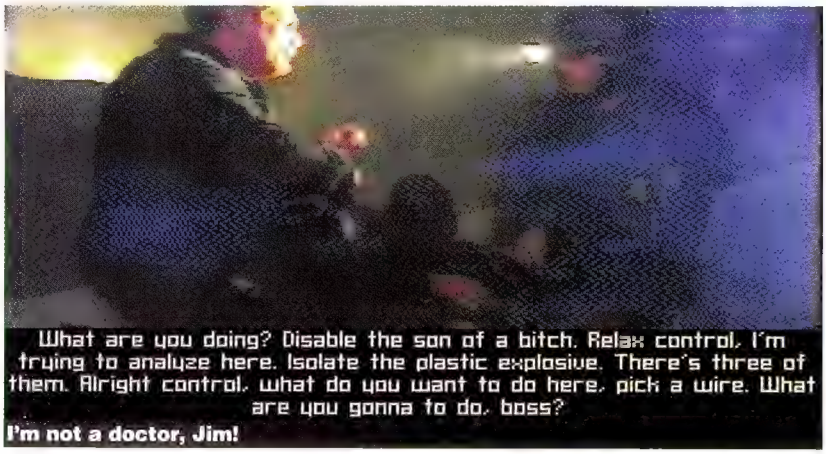
Get energized

Now you have the two objects you need. Take both of them to the area in the forest with the mumbling stones. Stand on the stone in the center and the relic should be energized. Now it's time to hunt down the minotaur and the werewolf, because after a couple of blasts from the relic they'll be history. You don't have to kill them, but after getting your butt kicked by them for the whole game you wouldn't believe the feeling of joy when they finally croak.

There are two ways to get to the endgame room. The first we already discussed and the other is to go further down in the dungeon below the hanging monk. Any way you get there you will come face to face with the demon that has possessed Ecstatica, and after a little chat you have a decision to make. Hand over the relic, or fight. The decision is yours to make, and you will get two different endgames depending on what you choose to do.❑

REVIEW

FLASH TRAFFIC


What are you doing? Disable the son of a bitch. Relax control, I'm trying to analyze here. Isolate the plastic explosive. There's three of them. Alright control, what do you want to do here, pick a wire. What are you gonna to do, boss?
I'm not a doctor, Jim!

I don't think I'm alone in stating the fact that I consider a game something that is highly interactive. **Flash Traffic: City of Angels** from *Tsunami Media* and *Time Warner Interactive* is one of these full motion video "interactive" movies, which remind me a lot of a choose-your-own adventure book. The repercussions of your actions are set in stone, but you get to choose which path to take through a series of "prompts" as the movie plays on your screen.

You assume the role of an FBI Special Agent in Charge, and there's a national crisis evolving. A nuclear bomb is set to destroy the City of Angels, and it's up to you to solve this intriguing mystery, and as the box puts it, this is a "race against time." A major selling point of this game is the fact that Chuck Pfarrer, the author behind Hard Target and Navy SEALs is the man who scribed this story. In all honestly, compared to his two movie scripts, the plot leaves a lot to be desired — perhaps he did try to make this script a movie before a game, and failed?

As I mentioned above, the plot is rather ludicrous, and filled with clichés, but it can be interesting. One positive aspect is the fact that there is a potentially high replay value, as each time you play the game events will change. Although there may be 3 CD-ROMs worth of video, the first time I played this title I finished it in under one hour. Even with the chance to replay the game 3 or 4 times, finishing it in an hour is just not worth the price of admission. I liked the idea of choosing the fate of the story through prompts, but there needed to be an actual game behind all the video in order to impress my eyes (and fingers).

Just like a flash of lightning, **Flash Traffic** is quick and abrupt, but it leaves a certain stigma behind. *Tsunami* might not have had the funds to hire proper actors, but couldn't they throw in an arcade game or some interaction besides the video? I wanted to get into this adventure, but I always felt like an outsider to the action. The plot is acceptable, but the poor acting, short playtime, and lack of a true game behind the video segments makes this choose-your-own-adventure game an adventure not worthy of purchase.❑

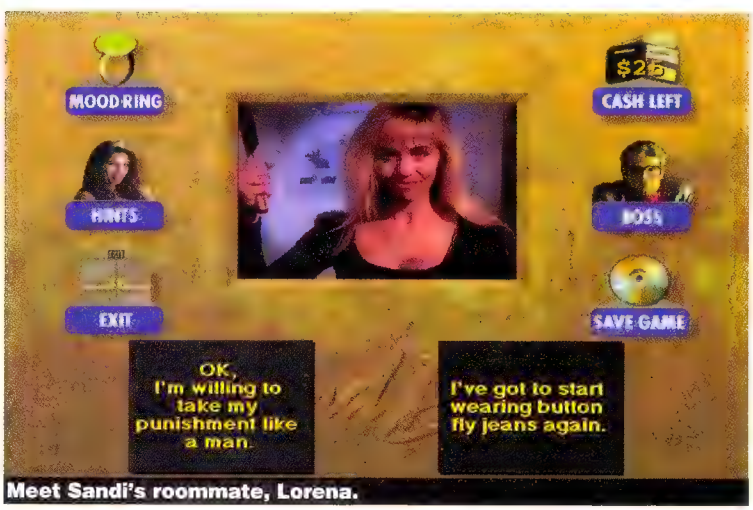
Geoff Keighley

Designed by: Tsunami Media
Published by: Time Warner Interactive
Systems: IBM CD-ROM, MPEG

BLIND DATE

Trimark International in conjunction with *3Vision Interactive Pictures* presents **Blind Date**, a journey into the world of Singles Clubs, steamy cleavage, great pickup lines and other general machismo.

You are in the capable (?) hands of D.U.D.S. That is to say, "Dates Unlimited for Desperate Schmucks." They've failed you before, but not anymore. Before you can say, "This game is pretty lame," you are whisked away to the apartment of Sandi, the beautiful and succulent. She challenges you to a game of pool and can this woman ever play games. Your mission is to spew forth the correct sequence of canned responses which will please, impress and seduce Sandi so that you might ultimately wind up in her...ummm...good graces.



The interface consists of a windowed environment, the center of which is the "action window." Here you are able to watch the gyrations of Sandi, her roommates and others. The surrounding area consists of various icons, one of which is a "Boss" symbol — to be selected when your boss comes in while you're playing this at work. A fake "official looking" (unless you notice the sleazy captions below the icons) window appears. The other remarkably captivating icon is Sandi's mood ring (of course) which changes from red to blue in varying degrees depending on how she felt about your latest quip.

This brings us to the actual game play. A mini-scene occurs in the action window. The scene may range from a one sentence retort by Sandi to an entire workout routine sequence by a scantily clad roommate. You are then presented with two or three or even four possible responses! But be careful. How you respond may lead you further on the path to ecstasy, or you may wind up out the door, or even worse, in the bathroom in the company of Sandi's roommate with a penchant for knives - no appendage is safe.

Above average realistic graphics and good quality sound-in-sync are the real saviors of what might otherwise be an exercise in the truly trite. *National Lampoon* has endorsed this game and indeed it contains the usual fluff n' stuff, sophomoric humor and sexual innuendo for which *Lampoon* is famous. True aficionados of this brand of entertainment will probably enjoy the game, although I don't recommend it much to women of any persuasion. But for skin worshippers — could be a lotta leg for the bucks, guys.❑

Cindy Yans

Designed by: 3Vision Interactive
Published by: Trimark International
Systems: PC CD-ROM

ROBINSON'S REQUIEM™ CD-ROM

Robinson's Requiem is a survival/adventure simulation set in a startling realistic virtual environment, the likes of which have never been seen before.

The Scenario

Imprisoned on an alien planet your aim is to escape. If you have to amputate one of your own limbs to stay alive, then that's what you must do. Features more than 100 variables managed in real time: your body temperature, stress, fatigue, pain, disease, gangrene, hallucinations…

The Prison

A spectacular world combining 3D rendered sequences, live actors with a 3D mapped landscap - computed and displayed in real time. Over 3 square miles of play area includes: canyons, hills, waterfalls, and caves.

The Challenge

Hunt and gather food, find water, make your own clothing and weapons, deal with health hazards and fight off predators; test your survival skills to the very limit and get the hell off the planet!

Available for:
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3DO

For more information contact:
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Markham, Ontario Canada L3R 0H2
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READYSOFT

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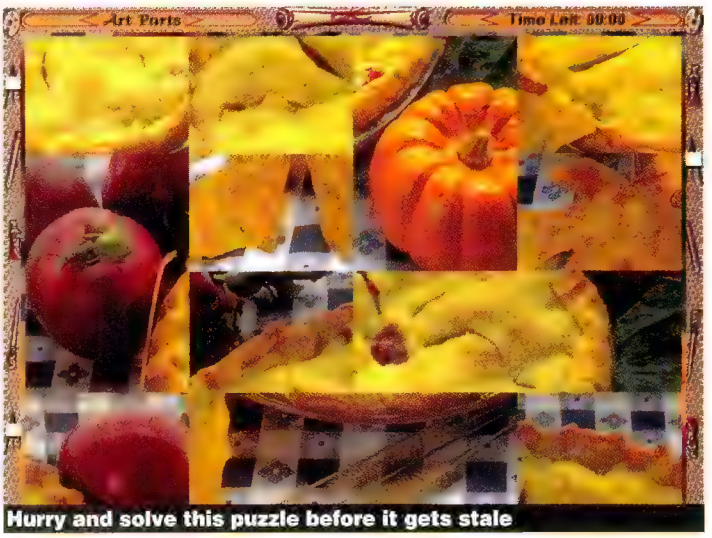
Distributed by ReadySoft Incorporated.
Reader Service No. 73

HODJ 'N PODJ

Never trust a lobster



Hurry and solve this puzzle before it gets stale

REVIEW

Folks, let's not ignore the fact that *Microsoft*'s **Arcade Pack** is one of the hottest-selling titles for the more general gaming audience. Only trouble with it is that it's not as much of a draw for veteran gamers.

Hodj 'n Podj (**HP**), however, has the same kind of "get to it quick, play for a few minutes or a few hours" appeal of an **Arcade Pack** but combined with gameplay that will entice even the most inveterately jaded puzzle players on the planet.

Traditional in the best sense

The most important thing to note about **HP** upfront is that at root it's a collection of nineteen mini-games, many of which are excellent computerizations of some very traditional games, from a number of different cultures ("Mankala," for instance, is based on a West African game that's at the very least hundreds of years old; "Peggleboz" derives from a game sometimes called "Nine Men's Morris," which dates back to the English Renaissance at the very least).

There's a reason such traditional games have lasted hundreds of years — they're fun! They're absorbing, they're easy to figure out, they take very little time to get into and they can be played many times over without getting boring or repetitive (more than you can say for almost any computer game). *Boffo*'s executed a master stroke here by not only getting back to the roots of what makes computer gaming fun, but by getting back to the even deeper roots of what makes *gaming* — period — a pleasurable experience.

Were have we seen this before?

The best of the Boffo nineteen

It would take the remainder of this review to merely list and describe the nineteen included mini-games, so here's a highlight of just a few readers will likely recognize. "Maze o' Doom" and "Pack Rat" are both **Pac-Man** style maze games; "Doom" features a series of randomized invisible walls, adding an extra twist to the traditional challenge of this kind of game. "Battlefish" is an ingenious computerization of a **Stratego**-style game, wherein the player must guess and then harpoon the opponent's invisibly-placed fish on the other side of the board, after having set up his or her own fish in a pattern least likely to be figured out by the other side. "Word Search" is ye olde "find the words in the scrambled letters" word game, with a host of different categories available to start the game with. "Art Parts" is a jigsaw-puzzle style game. And "Beacon" is an unusual game which tests the player's ability to anticipate palette changes as a beacon of light rotates in a circle around the playing board (the game is almost indescribable and almost completely addictive). And so it goes.

The board game

The 19 mini-games, all organized in a Windows™-based design that's as simple as a breeze to install, are just the core of **HP**. If you want to, you can keep these on the computer to boot up for little game sessions whenever you want. However, there's much more to **HP** than this collection; a board game, organized around the two opponents Hodj and Podj (two players can play against each other or one can play against the computer) is also available, and provides an opportunity to play a series of the mini-games to pursue a larger-scale goal.

The goal of the board game is to wander around the board playing the mini-games, success with which will lead to items, information and money all necessary for the player's effort to rescue the two princesses Mish and Mosh (there's a theme here, eh?). The items, money and information must be traded at shops to gain the necessary means to rescue the princesses, thus adding a CRPG-like inventory element. No fighting, though — yes!

The board game plays a little bit like the classic *Parker Brothers* boardgame **Life**, in that you have a number of spaces you move around in, with points determined as you move controlling the distances you can move and events made available as you reach certain spaces. The difference is that it's all beautifully animated in SVGA, and offers options to take a boat to certain areas of the board, to wander in different landscapes and climes, even to take a skycar to certain regions of the board. A perfect example of how to do a boardgame *right* on the computer; something most wargame designers could learn scads from.

All in all **Hodj n Podj** is truly a gamer's game, and provides an opportunity to gather together all the pleasures of traditional non-computer gameplaying in one place. At the same time, it provides a showcase for how to *do* traditional gaming on a computer which the rest of the industry could learn much from. Highly recommended!❑

Steve Wartofsky

Designed by: Boffo Games
Published by: Virgin Games
Systems: IBM PC with Windows
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: Any Windows compatible sound card
Supports: Mouse, Keyboard

"*Triad* is a truly awesome game."* But don't take our word for it.

RISE OF THE TRIAD

DARK WAR

"*Rise of the Triad* is sure to have every *DOOM* freak in the world lining up just to drool all over it."
— *Interactive Entertainment*

"*Rise of the Triad* provides everything an action gamer could want."
— *Computer Game Review*

"This game is the most multiplayer-friendly product we've seen. DeathMatch will never be the same again."
— *Computer Gaming World*

- Taunt your opponents with RemoteRidicule™ during 11-player network games.

- An industry first - Violence Level Adjustment with password - only get gore if you want it!

- Die as one of five unique characters (male & female) on over thirty levels of action!

This is the game you've been waiting for. An all-out blast-fest. The unrelenting blood and fire rampage of your most twisted nightmares. With ten incredibly vicious weapons, you annihilate the enemy. Your machine gun blasts holes in the walls. Sparks and metal fly as you blow apart everything in sight. Mass destruction has never been this fun!

APOGEE

FormGen

Created by Apogee Software, Ltd. and distributed by FormGen Inc. 7641 E. Gray Rd. Scottsdale, AZ. 85260 (800) 263-2390
Available on disk and CD. Supports serial, modem, and 11-player network (individual or team) play.
(body bags not included)

THE HANGAR

Two efforts to update air traffic control simulation give Crunch something to munch on

Perhaps in an attempt to "scoop" *The Bruce Artwick Organization, Trimark Interactive* has recently released **Air Havoc Controller**. The design provides grist for the mill for those of us who remain interested in clarifying the distinction between "realistic simulations" and plain olde games.

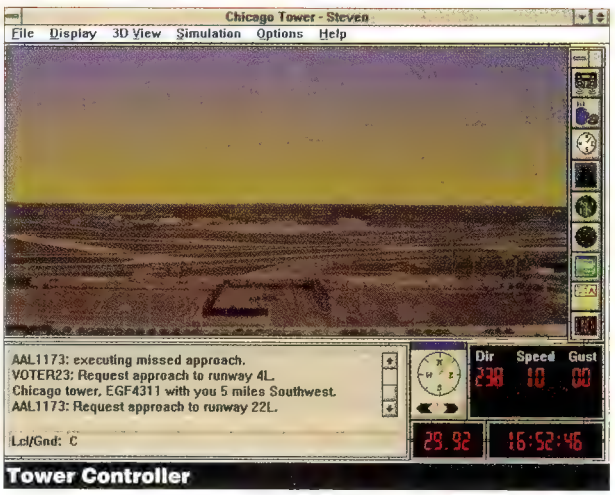
Air Havoc Controller *looks* real pretty — the opening, the included animations, etc. are nicely done (though rather sluggish on a double-speed CD-ROM, the design really needs a quad-speed to do animation smoothly in SVGA) — but it's a definite lightweight in the areas flight curmudgeons pay attention to. It's even a definite lightweight as a game; designers venturing into the area of flight simulation continue to fail to get this important point: *you can't design a piece of software to sell it as an "unrealistic but fun" simulation.* Games are arcade games, CRPGs, adventures, fantasy simulations, wargames or first-person combat or interaction designs of various sorts. Simulations are simulations, and any attempt to screw around with the basic goals of a simulation — i.e. to represent some aspect of reality faithfully — isn't likely to produce interesting, or even entertaining results.

Crap detector on

It's almost an automatic assumption on the part of most of our audience at this point that when they hear, "well, it's not a realistic simulation but it's designed to be fun *instead*," they're actually hearing (in the BS-detector present in most right-thinking software entertainment fans' inner ear canals) "this is a lightweight design without enough depth to qualify either as a simulation or even as entertainment." That's a given on the audience side that people on the performance side might want to remember; it's astonishing how many software publishers continue to dupe themselves into believing they can market a new design this way.

Maybe it doesn't take a Ph.D. or membership in Mensa to qualify as a flight sim fan, but the fact does remain that people interested in simulations of any sort have expectations that are *far* more rigorous than those present for other kinds of entertainment software design. The reason anyone buys a flight or air combat (or even fantasy) *simulation* is because they're looking for something that will go well beyond a mere shoot-'em-up or hack-'n-slash or click-'n-pick game.

The pleasures to be derived from a good simulation are parallel in many ways to the pleasures experienced during any machine performance-oriented activity. Our readers are going to demand as much from a software simulation as they might from, say, a new high-performance auto design in the real world (splayed out in the pages of a *Car and Driver*, for instance); comparisons are going to be made along the lines of specifications and the types of precision by which such designs are judged, rather than on a more generally impressionistic, "well, it's *fun*" basis. In fact, while many of our readers have lots of experience with real flight (and even air combat), even those who are more purely spectators (or historians, for the WWI-and II inclined) are going to pay lots of attention to spec and performance issues — it's what makes a simulation worth paying attention to, after all.


Chicago Tower - Steven
File Display 3D View Simulation Options Help
AAL1173: executing missed approach.
VOTER23: Request approach to runway 4L.
Chicago tower, EGF4311 with you 5 miles Southwest.
AAL1173: Request approach to runway 22L.
Lcl/Gnd: C
Dir Speed Gust
238 10 00
29.92
16:52:46
Tower Controller

Does it have legs

Which is also to say that when our typical reader buys a simulation, it's a piece of software they plan to use for *years*, ideally — not hours or months. This again distinguishes a simulation from a game — many games these days are designed to be finished within the week after purchase (which perhaps means players will buy six in a month rather than one, or so the companies would hope), whereas the best simulations are designed to be serviceable for a minimum of two to three years (depending on compatibility across hardware upgrades).

Which is finally to say: if you're a simulation fan, *BAO*'s **Tower Controller** is a must have. If you're a **Flight Simulator** fan, repeat, **Tower Controller** is a must have. More than **Tracon** or **Tracon II**, **TC** is simply one of the most significant efforts at real-world simulation ever to hit the PC. In all likelihood (like **FS** itself), **TC** could easily serve

Top 5 Simulations

Flight

1. Flight Sim 5.0
2. 1942: Pacific Air War
3. F-14 Fleet Defender
4. Aces Over Europe
5. Falcon 3.0

Land-Based

1. Metaltech: Earthsiege
2. Aces of the Deep
3. NASCAR Racing
4. Armored Fist
5. M1 Tank Platoon

Fantasy

1. Wing Commander III
2. TIE Fighter
3. Magic Carpet
4. Zephyr
5. MS Space Simulator

anyone interested as an entryway into the real-world profession of air traffic control, it's that detailed, realistic, and carefully designed.

TC is not something even the average sim user is going to learn overnight, or even in a week; even more than *Microsoft/BAO*'s recent **Space Simulator**, this design takes the audience into the heart of the reality it is attempting to simulate.

Realistic sim and hot graphics

Unlike earlier realistic efforts to do air traffic control, however (**Tracon** and **Tracon II**), **TC** is *not* all radar displays and ASCII alphanumerics. It offers those, of course, in a 640x480 Windows-based SVGA environment, giving the designers a chance to replicate real air traffic control radar displays in as much detail as possible. And it offers plenty of text and voice output by the simulation during a scenario, again to replicate the real-world environment an air traffic controller would have to deal with.

But **TC** goes all the multimedia hype one better with its SVGA representation of the out-the-tower view provided as the main (background, if you wish) screen. While the user is running the simulation, vectoring incoming and outgoing flights to the proper assigned runways, detailed, photo-realistic renderings of both the airport environment and the air traffic are synchronized to the process. True, this aspect of the design is again more of a "wow" factor in the visuals (and is a nice reward for those willing to get into the actual simulation — it's the best eye candy yet seen in the Multimedia Age) than it is the core of the design, but it also contributes immeasurably to the atmosphere of the overall simulation, adding that extra little touch to insure a you are there experience.

TC is not a game (as one reviewer said of **Wolf** recently in another publication) — and this is a good thing! Believe me! It's not a dry, instructional video, either. It's an opportunity to develop some real understanding of the concerns and techniques and skills necessary to good air traffic control. As such, it's dangerously involving — once you begin to understand what you have to do, you *are* going to lose many hours in front of the screen working through the various scenarios provided with the initial design (the software is well prepared for future releases of new scenarios, featuring new airports and tower controller situations to develop; the situations and scenarios are complex enough in design that at least this early on, it doesn't look likely that the equivalent of a "mission builder" could be provided for the user, though anything is possible). And the career system present in the design will reward those many hours of involvement with a carefully designed system of analysis and certification which will clue you into how much you're achieving as you learn the challenges of air traffic control.

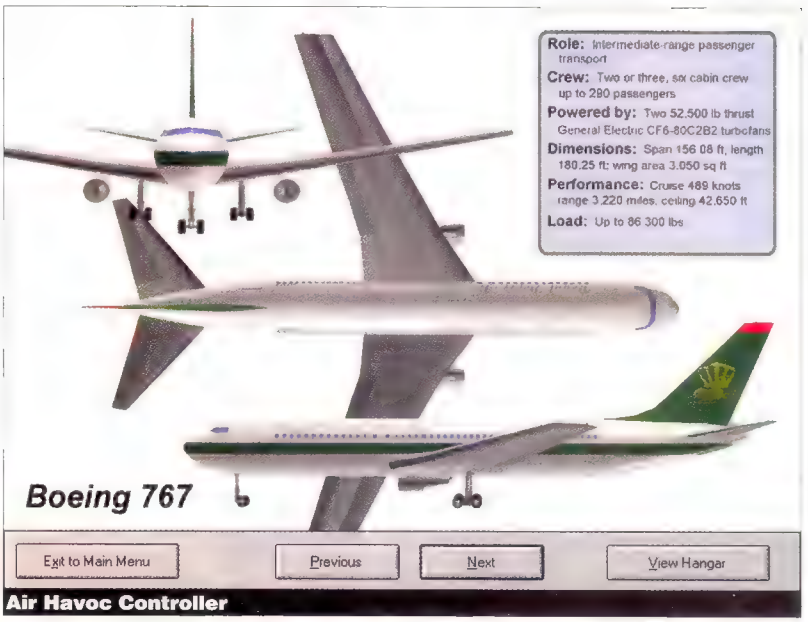
With all that emphasis on realism, the other hot little bit of excitement for **TC** is that, yes, it will connect with **Flight Simulator 5.0** (**5.1**). Owners of BBSes will be delighted to know that if you have a multiple-line modem connect setup, so that a number of callers can log in simultaneously across a number of serial ports, the BBS can theoretically (not tested out for this report yet) serve as an air traffic control center for a number of other remote computers running **FS5**, to set up, for instance, something that's been quite popular over the years on *CompuServe* with **FS** fans, the "fly-in."

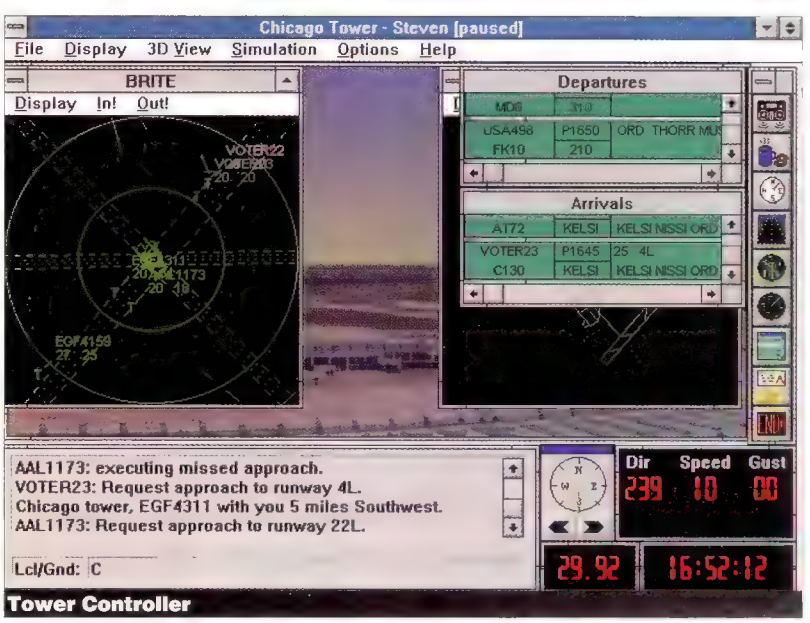
What's a fly-in? It's the software equivalent of the kinds of social gatherings small aircraft owners often plan on a weekend, where a number of flyers coordinate flights and arrivals so that they can get together at the destination airport at the end of the fly-in process (ideally for a barbecue or clam-bake). It looks like you will now be able to do full fly-ins with **TC** and a multi-serial setup.

It's worth noting that there's already a professional version of **TC** out there, **Tower Controller Pro**. Don't expect to buy this any time soon, though; the hardware required to run it is *very* expensive, and the software is designed to be used at professional training facilities for real air traffic controllers.

TC is rather unique in that it's probably one of the first simulations to be *scaled back* to function as entertainment/personal software in the genre (**Falcon 3.0** is the only other design that comes to mind, with its floating-point "high fidelity" flight model taken from software designed for military training).

The last thing to note about the beta of **Tower Controller** that's our feature story this column is that it looks like it's going to be a real showcase for Windows and Windows 95. The software makes very efficient use of the Windows interface, providing the maximum of flexibility and configurability for best performance during training. Zowie, Batman.❑


Role: Intermediate-range passenger transport
Crew: Two or three, six cabin crew up to 290 passengers
Powered by: Two 52,500 lb thrust General Electric CF6-80C2B2 turbofans
Dimensions: Span 156 08 ft, length 180.25 ft; wing area 3,050 sq ft
Performance: Cruise 489 knots range 3,220 miles, ceiling 42,650 ft
Load: Up to 86 300 lbs
Boeing 767
Exit to Main Menu
Previous
Next
View Hangar
Air Havoc Controller



REVIEW

WING COMMANDER III

The hype machine has been working overtime on **Wing Commander III - Heart of the Tiger (WC3)**, and it's made it extremely difficult to view the game without being somewhat jaded. You end up judging it on a level that is perhaps unfair to the game. Dispensing with the hype, let's just state this fact: **WC3** is a graphically stunning, entertaining action game featuring perhaps the finest integration of film and game seen to date, providing a satisfying, although at times frustrating, whole.

Look at the amazing detail on this Kilrathi Corvette

Ready for takeoff - note the sharp cockpit graphics

This shot is from one of the land-based missions

In case you've been in prison the last year, **WC3** is an space combat simulator/interactive movie starring Mark Hamill as Colonel Christopher Blair. The war with the bad guys, the Kilrathi, is going bad, and you are sent to the Victory, an all-too-typical refuge for outcast and rebel pilots, who you will bring together and lead into battle to defeat the bad guys (well, not enough to stop **Wing Commander IV**). The plot is developed through the use of full motion and rendered video sequences, which are by far the best seen in any computer game to date.

After all of the video stuff, the missions themselves can be fairly bland, with the majority being of the "scout this area" or "escort this supply ship to point A" variety. After receiving your mission briefing (in full motion video) you choose your wingman (who are the single most ethnically and sexually diverse group of pilots in the galaxy), and after this you can choose which of the available crafts to fly and the weapons loadouts. Now you are ready to fly the actual mission. Time for a visit to the fridge.

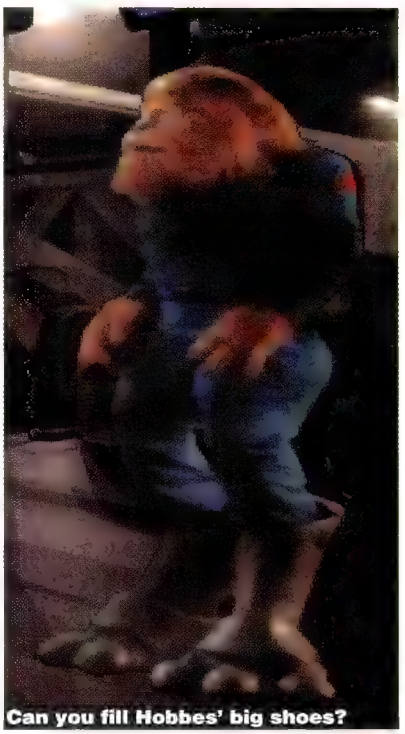
Epic delays

One of the greatest flaws of the game is the epic delays which occur all too frequently, especially when loading a mission. It's not the CD, as it remains silent during these delays. It's your hard disk light that gets the workout as the game does God knows what with the 20 megabyte virtual memory file it creates. I have heard from other players that load times are halved with 16 megabytes of RAM, but on a Pentium with eight megabytes of RAM it can take up to four minutes to load a mission. Compare that with **TIE Fighter**, where you are instantly in the action.

You may wonder why these delays are such a big deal: they really bring the whole game to a halt. There are long delays where absolutely *nothing* happens on screen. Not even a counter or an hourglass. The game may as well be locked up. This all becomes especially grating when you get one of those "We're under attack! Everyone into their planes! We're all going to die!" types of missions. The only positive aspects of these delays are that you can do a few household chores while waiting for missions. I managed to finish *War and Peace* during the lulls in the action.

Amazing graphics

The frustration of waiting for the game is offset by the pleasure attained when it actually takes flight. When one of the Kilrathi make a pass in front of your ship in all of their hi-resolution glory you will be as close as is currently possible to being a Luke Skywalker in a movie. The in-flight action shows that **WC3** is by far the best-looking and sounding space simulation ever created for the personal computer. Those graphics can cause a slowdown near the huge Capital ships, but a mode is available which allows the game to switch to lower resolution VGA graphics automatically when the frame rate falls below a certain level. The digital sound is all crystal clear, and the music, when played through a General MIDI wavetable sound card, is excellent.



Can you fill Hobbes' big shoes?

During the actual deep-space flights, the action is incredibly smooth. The enemy AI seems to be greatly improved over the previous **Wing Commander** games, and your wingmen in particular are much better pilots than they ever were in the past. The keyboard layout is somewhat confusing and the new navigation map, while quite attractive visually, seems somewhat unnecessary.

Warts and all, there is little doubt that **Wing Commander III** is the multimedia gaming event of the year. If you have the hardware, this is the game that will justify the cost. If you scrutinize the individual parts of the game you can find fault with them, but somehow *Origin* have managed to make the parts mesh well. Taken as a whole there is no game quite like it: **Wing Commander III** is a spectacular, amazing, frustrating, surprising, and thoroughly entertaining epic.❑

Steve Bauman

Designed by: Origin Systems, Inc.
Published by: Electronic Arts
Systems: IBM PC CD-ROM
Graphics: 256 color VGA and VESA compatible SVGA
Supports: Thrustmaster FCS, Flightstick Pro
Sound Support: Sound Blaster and compatibles, General MIDI, AWE32, Ultrasound

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EARTHSIEGE

Part two: Steve Wartofsky goes for the salvage

If you've started in on **Metaltech: EarthSiege** (**ES**), you've probably at the very least found some of the missions difficult, and some of the campaigns nearly impossible.

This hasn't been true for everyone, and the reason is that there are some techniques — some of which virtually amount to cheats or workarounds to avoid the game's built-in AI — which make the game *much* easier to get through. For those who'd like to maintain the challenge and stick with the rules of the game, as defined by the mission parameters set up at the start of each mission, we'll start out with some more general ideas. The tricks we'll discuss at the end.

Last month's startup tips should be repeated briefly here, for those who may have just picked up this issue — here they are:

Summary

First, learn to optimize movement and control, ideally using two joysticks (it's really almost impossible to enjoy a tank sim using only one, and **ES** is in essence a tank sim, like **Armored Fist** and **Zephyr**). Secondly, learn to aim carefully while moving and rotating the turret — this is the main reflex-oriented skill you'll need to develop to handle **ES** well, and there are really no substitutes for training in this area. Thirdly, use radar to your advantage and not your opponent's — keeping a low radar profile is critical, as it is with most air combat sims. Use radar only enough to try to guarantee first contact with the opponent, and combine limiting radar signature with non-linear movement towards the goal to maintain stealth. Finally, use any other allied units in the mission to your advantage; whether for scouting, backup or air attack depends on the mission, your allied units' equipment, and your own capability.

Down to business

Now to dig in a little deeper on each of the above.

Movement, as with any good tank sim, should be performed in hunt and sniff fashion until first contact (preferably via radar) is made. Move a little, stop, scout around (*briefly* — you don't want to advertise your presence to any opponents searching themselves), then move on. If you've identified an opponent unit, depending on the terrain and the mission parameters, your first thought should not be how best to plunge in quickly for attack but how best to *avoid* a confrontation. Remember that the fiction in the manual makes clear that this is not a shoot-'em-up style game, but is more in the venue of an **F-117A Stealth Fighter** (*MicroProse*), where avoidance of detection and confrontation is always key.

We're already moving a bit into the next topic — radar management — here, but avoidance of detection and confrontation is as much an issue of movement technique as it is of radar technique. Charging in with guns blazing never works well in **ES**, especially since it alerts the game's AI to your whereabouts and in many scenarios initiates vectoring of more opponent units your way subsequent to first contact and battle (in other words, while you're in a firefight many tons are getting ready to join the fray — too bad **ES** doesn't allow you to call in extra support in the same way! Oh well, that's outside the domain of the game's fiction).

Planned maneuvers

The alternative to a full charge (we're not talking about weapons here, that's later, too!) is a careful initial scouting, and then deliberate planning of appropriate avoidance maneuvers once a detection has been made. Realize that as soon as you've detected an opponent unit, there's a good chance they'll have detected you as well; if you can find a way to make use of nearby vertical terrain for masking this will prove a good temporary measure, though the computer-run

Full moon and ready to hunt

Enemy toasters in retreat!

Should have listened to my wingie

Home base where everyone likes to shop

HINTS & TIPS

opponents seem to have an inordinate fondness for chasing you around mountains once they've found you near one (and an unusually good ability to figure out where you're likely to be going next when trying to use such terrain-masking techniques).

Better than playing ring around the rosie is immediate reversal at top speed (no need to turn around) and then sudden breaking right or left for a few seconds, reversal of movement again and then heading off at top speed in a direction forty-five degrees off your original course. Make a "V" as your first avoidance tactic; and then think in similar ways about other kinds of movement techniques which could be used both to break radar contact and still head for the ultimate target.

One technique that defeated the AI in **Ultrabots** (*Novalogic*) quite definitively was what could be called the "two magnets on either side of a flat object" approach; since in that design the opponent would always lock onto your unit and try to stick to you like glue, if you were far enough away you could use the overhead map to try to put a mountain between you and the opponent — at which point the opponent, if set appropriately on the other side of the mountain, would be left trying to move *through* the mountain towards you, running into it repeatedly without any idea how to back up and turn around. You could then move on and he'd be left dreaming wistfully about your presence on the other side of that mountain...

This is a kind of cheat which **ES** doesn't allow – fortunately! It's a tough kind of AI situation to program for and avoid, and obviously the designers at *Dynamix* put some thought into it. If you try to leave an opponent face forward into a mountain kicking and screaming, it will eventually back up, turn around and find a way out of the situation. The hint here is, don't rely on such terrain obstacles to do you too many favors — the opponents will find a way around them (true in **Battledrome** as well, by the way, when in single-play mode in that game).

Spirit of the law

The cheat which *does* work in **ES** is to rebel against the letter of the law in the mission instructions and work the waypoints in each mission in reverse. Think of it as sneaking up on the opponent from the opposite direction he's expecting you. If you've found the game way too challenging, this will take lots of the stress off. On the other hand, it'll make it too easy to complete most of the campaigns — if you find the game too simple to get through using this cheat, just follow the mission instructions for more of a challenge again. The designers obviously couldn't plot opponent AI to handle the possibilities of approaches from opposite directions in each mission; some will consider this a flaw in the design, others a back-door or else typical for almost any game professing some sort of AI (PCs just can't handle a wide range of AI contingencies effectively, so a relatively linear tactical approach situation becomes necessary in order to create a challenge. Thank *Dynamix* for leaving the opponents' backsides uncovered for those who hate a challenge).

Last movement advice is that slower speeds mean a tighter turning radius, as is the case with air combat sims — within limits; slow down too much and your Herc starts taking baby steps, with almost no noticeable turning result. Learn the optimal slow speed for maximizing turning and then shoot for it when throttling down as rapidly as possible — and don't overshoot. Again, practicing the coordination of throttle with turning is necessary to maximize the effectiveness of your turning technique.

Radar management

Don't. It's that simple. For the most part, don't use your radar. Think of your radar as something you have to swat off as immediately as you can once the reason you've turned it on has been fulfilled. As stated above, this means that you just want to blip the radar on and off periodically to try to detect opponents (leave it on no more than about three seconds when scanning for opponents, if you see nothing, move a little further forward slowly, then scan again for a few seconds). Relying on passive radar is okay, but is more likely to bring you into fire range for the opponent than detecting him first — if he shows up on passive radar he's more than likely already within range to turn you into toaster metal, so try to find him first. By the way, always have allies shoot down air opponents when possible — they provide early radar warning for the computer's team.

When using radar for weapons, study the needs of the particular weapons system. Is it fire and forget? If so, you only need to radar the target to get an initial lock; then fire the weapon and immediately *radar off* — leave it up to the weapon to follow the initial lock into target. If it's *not* fire-and-forget, you're in a trickier situation: radar the target and then be prepared to move backwards fast after (or during) your firing the missile, so that ideally you can keep the target within your radar lock range while staying *out* of *his* firing range (yes, this is possible, and a pleasure when it works out right).

We'll get into a discussion of weapons, communications and coordinated attack techniques in another article. Enjoy **ES** — it's probably the best mecha game out there right now! Write in if you have some tips of your own you'd like to share. Comms out.❑

Caught in a firefight

REVIEW

CYBERIA

Let's just hope the clay pigeons are loaded!

Welcome to the future of gaming! Welcome to the future of **Cyberia** by *Interplay*. If **Cyberia** is any predictor, the future looks intense and very enjoyable, especially for any *James Bond* wanna-be's out there. The story of **Cyberia** rates right up there with the style of the best of the more recent *James Bond* movies, and includes all the hardware, intrigue, sexual fantasy woven into layers of danger and the rush of the chase and hunt characteristic of those movies. The basic *story* itself is utterly conventional, but then again the expectations in this genre aren't that high to begin with, and all the conventions of the action spy thriller are worked through as the game progresses. Shades of *Miami Vice* creep into the atmosphere of the world of **Cyberia** as well.

Cyber hot

The graphics in this game are fantastic, the gameplay smooth and intense. The choice to have the acting done by cyber-animated characters is a good one, given the general atmosphere of the game; their animation is convincing and conveys the sense of brooding tension characterizing the game's story.

Never before have I seen such incredibly detailed, smoothly scrolling terrain. While this terrain functions primarily in the action portions of the game (which limit the player's control to a primarily shoot-'em-up style of air combat), it's a pleasure to behold.

From the opening animated sequence to the intense play of the game, **Cyberia** is hot. **Cyberia** takes place in the future where you, assuming the role of Zak, fly a super-sophisticated fighter over sea and land. While much of this portion of the design is an arcade style action game, much like **Rebel Assault**, it looks to have gone **Rebel Assault** one better in both the game play and graphics departments. Control is smooth and precise. Flying through the fjords of Norway is a spectacle not to be missed. I've flown through the fjords of Norway in real life, and the designers of **Cyberia** have done a first-rate job of capturing the feel of flying in that environment.

Limited control

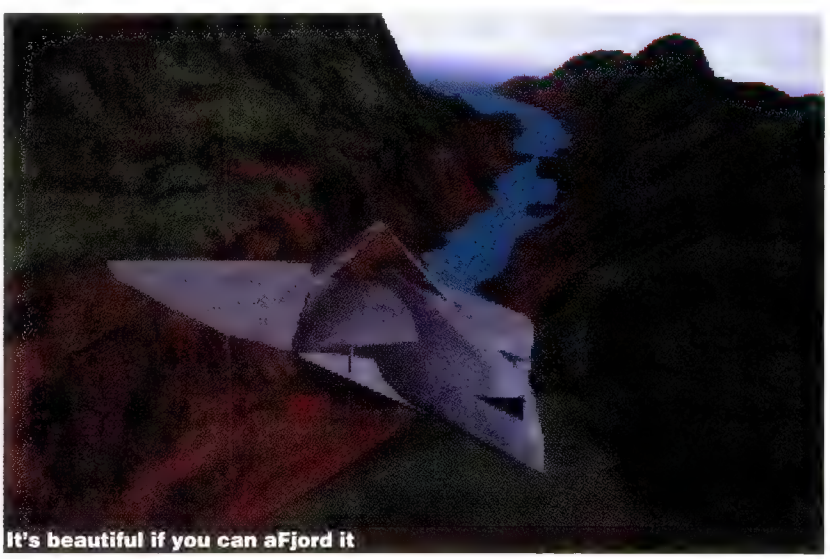
The player's control of the craft is in fact limited in the early portions of the game, which might seem a negative except that it helps people new to the medium get into the swing of the game without too much to think about or monitor. The early flying sequences are really tutorials in some ways, pure arcade in others. The action goals are to hit a certain sequence of targets in a certain amount of time, and arcade sequences can be played over and over until the player gets them right.

The basics of the storyline break no new ground. In fact, they appear to be almost an afterthought. You must, surprise, save the world from the evil meanies who want to destroy the world with a doomsday weapon. *Don't these bad guys realize this will ruin their day too?!* But, in spite of the uninspired storyline **Cyberia** succeeds in drawing the player into the action, due to the outstanding graphics and the equally fantastic soundtrack. The character dialogue, while again conventional, is in fact more professionally voice-acted than usual for the medium, and helps make the characters in the story a little more believable. The pacing of the movie-like scenes is managed so that the rhythms of an action movie are maintained during play — while many of the adventure sequences play more like **Dragon's Lair** than anything else (at the proper moment press the left arrow key to make the character avoid the oncoming bad guy, etc.), there's nevertheless enough of a puzzle element, both in the player's negotiation of the branching storylines and in the handling of the series of graphical puzzles, to qualify **Cyberia** as a solid adventure (in the currently faddish "adventure means puzzles with first-person action" mode). As the adventure sequences progress, the player gets further and further into a situation where the first-person perspective approach turns into a kind of cyborg simulator, with Zak's various *Terminator*-like bioelectromechanical enhancements coming into play for the solution of puzzles.

With its multiple difficulty levels, incredibly detailed graphics, velvet-smooth frame rates, and pulse quickening game play Cyberia has the looks of a major hit. Highly recommended.❑

Rich Mason

Designed by: Xatrix Entertainment
Published by: Interplay
Systems: IBM PC CD-ROM
Graphics: VGA
Sound: Sound Blaster/compatibles
Supports: Keyboard, Joystick



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A little free mana in a magic circle

World restored -- all mana bars full

HINTS & TIPS

GETTING STARTED

Steve Wartofsky trots out a bunch of old rugs

Magic Carpet (**MC**) is a very odd game to get into; odd because it's simultaneously like nothing you've played before, and once you've been playing awhile, like a whole host of games you've played before. While the main thrust of the presentation is a 3D flying carpet simulation, the actual strategies used for success in the game begin to bring back fond memories of **Populous**. That's right! In fact, in many ways **MC** could be considered the kind of game a **Populous** would be if you could fly around it in first-person perspective. Kinda like that **Sim City** meets **Flight Simulator** some people kicked around as a nice idea awhile back. It's here now, folks.

Well, on to the show: this is an introductory piece, to get people settled into a game that's not initially very intuitive in control or process. The manual offers little in the way of illuminating some crucial beginner activities that many new users are going to be smacking their heads over once they figure them out.

Basics

First off, what's going on. You're on your carpet, and you have *nothing* to begin with, almost — no fireballs, no possess spells, no castle-building abilities, etc. You need to find these upon starting out by collecting the little red jugs. This should be obvious after a bit. The jugs give you starting spell abilities, which you can use to destroy creatures and collect mana with. The jugs are easily apparent in the early tutorial levels, but later on you have to "unlock" them from various magic rings, circles, pools, swamps, etc. and in the process you'll have to combat legions of opponents protecting them. Spells look like they're just for the taking early on, but once you've established your basic repertoire (at level 11 or so), watch out! Getting the higher spells can be tough, - almost not worth it in some instances.

With the initial spells under your belt, you'll be able to burn up monsters in nothing flat with the fireball spell. When a creature finally goes up in smoke (I find mouse control the best control option in **MC**, by the way), it breaks into a bunch of gold balls which, if on a slope, will start rolling down towards the nearest crevice or, barring any of those, the water surrounding the land mass. Firing the possess spell at the balls turns them white (or rather, a bluish-white), which is fine, but then they'll just sit there.

They'll sit there until you've built a castle. So find some good ground (in the first ten levels you're basically in tutorial mode so most of this will be easy-going), hit <Return> (or press both mouse buttons simultaneously), click on the castle spell icon with whichever mouse button you'll want to use to fire it, and then throw that little brown rocklet to start your castle up. Later you'll be able to throw a few at a time, starting up a nice, solid castle with some archers ready to defend it.

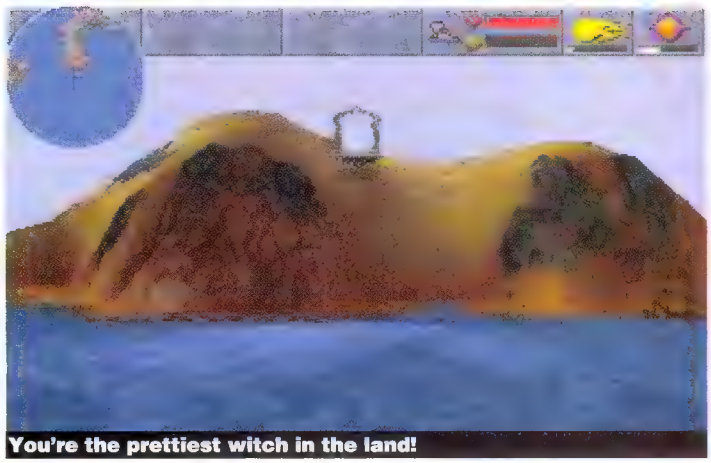
This may all sound obvious to some, but it builds the basis for some of the most interesting strategies later on. Notice how, once you've built your castle, your available mana goes down, for instance? Wait a bit and, if you're not under attack (and your castle is safe from same), a balloon will float out of the castle and over to those bluish-white mana balls you created earlier (in the tutorial levels there's also usually a bit of free gold mana lying around for initial consumption, always hit <Return> at the start of a level to look at the spells available, and to get an overview of the island(s) and situation). Once the balloon has transported the mana back to the castle, your general mana and energy levels will be increased substantially. As mana accumulates, your ability to expand your castle will improve as well.

Island overview

Offensive land development

All of the above castle-related activities can be put to use for offensive purposes as you get more acquainted with **MC**. That's right: try starting a level where a swarm of nasties are precipitated upon you by your flying over a magic circle (the one with the blinking black dots on the full map screen accessed with <Return>), then hit <Shift-R> to restart the level and this time, when you get to the swarm, after unleashing them quickly hit a Make Castle spell right on the spot where they've conjugated. Kaboom! They've all been turned to mana instantly, you possess them like crazy and then your balloon will be

Player without castle possesses enemy castle


You're the prettiest witch in the land!

IN MAGIC CARPET

right there to pick them up, creating an instant mana store for you (and thus a general increase in all your spell abilities, including the ability to enlarge your castle). Thanks to *Bullfrog* for this little tip.

Extrapolate on that idea and consider how else you can use terrain effects to offensive or defensive advantage. Building castles is the equivalent of the "raise land" option in **Populous**; and creating crevasses with your fireball spell power during battles (you can manage this intentionally, by the way, thus guiding any ground-based opponents into an area in the terrain where you can fire away at their concentrated presence with ease) is like the "lower land" option in same. I have yet to fire away enough at a piece of ground to lower it to water level, but I'm pretty sure it can be done. Not sure yet whether it'll do any good by way of drowning the enemy, though. Try it and see. Later spells improve upon the raise/lower options you begin with when using your castle-building and fireball-casting abilities at the start. The principles are progressive. What a little castle can do now, a huge, spewing volcano will do oh so much better once you have the volcano spell.

Carpet-beating

The other basic essential at the start of the game is learning how to fly that carpet with ease and agility. Once again, almost like some of the tank sims out there, but with much greater speed and fluidity, the goal here is not to keep moving in a forward direction but to manage your flight so that you can maintain a good aiming distance on any monsters (or wizards) that show up. Upon encountering a monster, try firing while backing away from it (early on this also works quite well for the swarms of flying beasties you often run into — the bees tend to make a beeline for you while the birds tend to flock around you, appropriately enough).

Try using the keyboard arrow keys in various combinations to get something other than forward, backward and sideslip control. Depending on the monster (or wizard), you may just have a continuous fight with one (or a group) or you may have to break off to recuperate and then hunt the opponent down again (upon losing contact he — or it — may maneuver around you quickly; in the case of wizards investigate your "radar" screen and see if you can find a bunch of mana turning your opponent's color; the location and direction that color change is taking place is a clue to where the wizard's gone. With any luck you'll be able to trace his path via his spell-casting, which shows up on your radar as well).

Maneuvers

There are a number of basic flight maneuvers that are appropriate here. As with any air combat sim, you have to lead targets in a turning fight (these are most common with wizard opponents); you have to break off if you can't get a good spell-firing solution quickly (more enemies will vector into your location while you're in an endless turning fight and start picking on you if you stay more or less in one place during the fight); and later on in the game you have to use stealth and invisibility to sneak up on and strafe enemy castles from your carpet.

Unlike an airplane, the carpet doesn't have enough speed or thrust to work any kind of energy model, so gaining altitude won't increase airspeed and flying close to the ground won't be the equivalent to going low and slow in air combat, so no need to worry about that aspect of flight simulation here.

However, altitude can well be important depending on how your opponents are attacking; one maneuver, for instance, is to stay very low and fly backwards while firing at an approaching monster — this way your back and below are covered and you can tilt the front of the carpet up to control your aim. It may be my imagination but if you use this maneuver on swarms they get "wise" to it and break up, making the maneuver less effective down the line (the game *does* reputedly "learn" in response to player tactics, so there's always a chance this isn't just a hallucination).

Keyboard tactics

Finally, a simple but important activity to get under control: learn to anticipate which combinations of spells you'll need during your flying and fighting, and set them up beforehand so that, for instance, you can fireball and heal almost simultaneously by alternating beating on the right and left mouse buttons. *Microsoft* and other mouse manufacturers will be *so* happy. More later, hopefully!❑

Use forest fires to burn up beasties

ARMORED FIST FOR TANK FANS

Fusco natters about why the game fails to meet his expectations, then gets down to business

There seems to be a growing axiom in computer gaming the longer you wait for a product, the less your satisfaction with that product. **Armored Fist** (**AF**) is no exception to this rule. When I was assigned an **AF** strategy piece I was initially very excited; after all, first person tank simulations are rare these days. Besides, **AF** has been advertised since the dawn of **Comanche**, so my anticipation levels were high. It has also been heavily advertised as a realistic simulation of modern tank warfare. Previous to **AF**, only *MicroProse's* **M1 Tank Platoon** could make the claim of being a "realistic" first person simulation of armored conflict.

After struggling with **AF**, I still find **M1** to be a superior simulator even with its dated graphics (Why doesn't *MicroProse* update this classic?). Under the guise of playability, *Novalogic* actually crippled **AF** to the point of hampering playability. This makes developing a strategy guide problematic at best (I missed 1 deadline trying to come up with some solid strategies). To a *grognard*, the following problems make modeling armored warfare with **AF** a questionable exercise at best.

Hull down

A standard defensive tactic in armored conflict is to bring your tank into a "hull-down" position. In a hull down position you want the tank's turret just peeking over the crest of a hill. Ideally, the gunner should be able to see over the crest, while the driver sees only the hill. This position puts the strongest armor on a tank facing the enemy and makes the tank a very difficult target to sight and hit. In **AF** it is very difficult to get into a proper hull down position since no separate driver, gunner, and Tank Commander positions/views exist, as they do in **M1**. Even if you do manage to get into a hull down position, the enemy has no problems engaging you as if you were out in the open. In other words, an effective hull down defensive strategy is impossible.

The low resolution graphics of **AF** makes visual target acquisition an eye-taxing exercise. Hummmm... is that a tank, a rock or a tree??? Fortunately, there is an automatic target designator that has the ability to see the enemy before you do. Unfortunately, it has been programmed to view fuel tanks and other non-threats as major factors affecting your survival (Tank? What tank? That satellite dish was about to fry you).

Finally, and the most devastating problem with **AF** in my opinion, is that many of the battles place you in a situation that no self-respecting *grognard* would ever get him/herself into. Many times you start a battle surrounded, or being shelled, or heavily outnumbered or a combination of all of these things! The best strategy is obviously to avoid

We're pretty sure this is some sort of armored vehicle

A hit!

those types of situations by careful deployment of troops and appropriate reconnaissance activity. In fact, the **AF** manual has 11 pages devoted to giving some very good guidelines for developing a viable strategy for the deployment of armored assets. Unfortunately, all of this advice is useless for many of the battles included with **AF**. I suppose you can make believe that you were following the orders of a lunatic commander who finally got himself killed. Now it's up to you to get your men out of the mess he got you into. If this kind of fantasy appeals to you, go for it, but it is very unsatisfying to those of us who like to see the fruits of our labor as we painstakingly plan the perfect strategy.

OK, **AF** isn't a good simulation, but that doesn't mean that it can't be a fun game. You just cannot approach it as an accurate first person simulation of modern armored conflict. You have to approach it more as an action/arcade game with a strategy bent. You have to learn to use its strengths and minimize its weaknesses. With this in mind, I offer the following guidelines.

Finally, some useful info

Whenever you enter a new battle, *immediately* press <F10> to bring up the CCV map and then pause the action. If you are being shelled, you can usually determine from which direction(s) that activity is coming from and can plan appropriate action. If you start a new battle in a relatively calm state, this map will allow you to see the lay of the land and help you determine your next course of action. It will also allow you to determine the units in your command and their "health."

Learn to use your air assets wisely. This means not using them as air support units. Yes, you read that correctly. Do not use air assets as air support units. These units are flown by yellow-bellied cowards. They will rarely engage the enemy, preferring to "run away to fly another day." Don't fight with the system -- you will lose! Use the air assets as air reconnaissance units. Do you think the enemy is lurking behind that next crest? Send in the air "recon" units rather than risk a valuable ground unit in almost certain destruction. It works. If I find myself beginning a battle in a calm state (not under attack), I will often make use of the air units to scout out the land.

Aggressive opponents

While your air support units are cowards, the enemy units would like nothing more than to make your tank a pile of scrap metal. They are very aggressive and will often use stealthy approaches (as they should). Your best bet under these circumstances is advanced planning. Make sure that you keep a Bradley (or BMP) in your group. This armored vehicle carries SAMs and will automatically fire upon any enemy air target. Of course, this means protecting at least one of these units, at least until it runs out of SAMs. I found that the tactic described in the manual of using smoke to cover yourself was only moderately successful. If you lose your Bradley, don't despair; in spite of what the manual implies, Hinds can be downed with machine gun fire from your tank. However, it can be a real "crapshoot" as to who will die first -- your tank or the Hind.

The auto targeting system is a mixed blessing. As mentioned above, it helps to identify and lock onto enemy targets, but on the other hand it likes to lock onto targets that are not threats. If you switch to a manual targeting system, you will end up fighting a losing battle. It's like trying to beat an opponent who's armed with a fully automatic weapon with a slingshot. Sure, you might get lucky, but would you risk your life with those odds? I found that the best way to deal with this problem is to not fight with the system. The most common tactic people use in this situation is to try to break the lock and lock onto the threat. This cycle must be run through several times before a "successful" lock is obtained. In those seconds you often lock onto the same non-threat target a few times and are then quickly disposed of by the enemy. Next time, if you are in a non-threat, target rich environment, switch to the tank's machine gun. As soon as you lock onto a non-threat target, destroy it. This takes as much time as the break lock cycle, with the added advantage that you will not lock onto that target again. The machine gun destroys soft targets like fuel tanks easily, and does not hamper the tank's main gun. When you finally lock onto that enemy T-80, switch to the main gun and kill it. Just remember to keep moving and changing your direction. If you stand still, you're history.

Finally, use your artillery resources. Your air support personnel may be cowards, but the artillery support personnel are life savers and are deadly accurate (unlike the more realistic artillery units in **M1**). You can call in artillery support for locked-on targets, but it is most useful for lobbing shells against enemy units "hiding" behind the numerous hills in **AF**. This method calls for "walking" the shells into the enemy using the manual targeting mode described on page 25 and 29 of the manual. Use the CCV map to see where the shells are hitting and adjust accordingly. Judicial use of your artillery resources is the key to winning many of the scenarios. It's not as fun as killing those T-80's yourself, but it works and, best of all, it reduces the risks taken by your forces.

Okay, that'll do it for now. Me, I'm just an **M1 Tank Platoon** fan, I guess. Your mileage may vary.❑

Back in the old days all games were in black and white

HINTS & TIPS

Your best friend - the overhead map

Pause the action here and plan your strategy

CYCLONES

Bet'cha can't fold this map back in place!

CyClones, the brainchild of *Raven Software* (**Shadow Caster**, **Heretic**), represents yet another entry into the bulging first-person perspective shooting genre. A double entendre to be sure, **CyClones**, euphemistically abbreviated to supplant the less appealing cybernetic clones oxymoron "are alien attack creatures cloned from human tissue samples, genetically engineered and then cybernetically enhanced." That said, let's discuss the implied meaning.

Dinner for one

Like much of the recent crop of shoot-till-you-drop titles currently being churned out, **CyClones** comes thirsting for a plausible plot. First of all, there's little to cheer about as mankind ushers in the whirlwind signalling the third millenium. The world has succumbed to an epidemic of fend-for-yourselfitis where the richer nations shrug off the needs of their impoverished brethren. As if selfishness on a global scale wasn't enough to spin a few weather vanes, we've also been treated to the arrival of a new extraterrestrial house guest who prefers to dine alone.

From the minute the first scout ships are sited, it becomes obvious that sharing our planetary accomodations is not in the galactic cards. Worse still, the armies of our deadbeat wealthier nations have met with little success evicting earth's curious new tenants, and it appears that our planet may soon be embroidering a new "Home Sweet Home" welcome mat. Mankind is in the throes of extinction because the aliens are keenly bent on turning out our pilot lights, miserly considerations or not.

Hope, no matter how faint, still exists though. Fortunately, while mankind was still bickering over who owns the recipe for cannibal stew, several scientists had the foresight to band together and form an organization, colloquially acronymed as A.I. (Advanced Ideas Corporation). Partially funded by the U.S. military, naturally, A.I.'s mission had been to piece together all of the flimsy evidence thus far unearthed supporting the claims of the existance of U.F.O.s. Although the mix of moonshine and rednecks left a lot of lab coated speculators scratching their heads, the final piece of the transparent jigsaw puzzle came when a U.F.O. was forced to crash land on earth. Finally, it was proven beyond a shadow of a doubt; meat was indeed in a hot dog, but more importantly, we were not alone.

Not only did A.I. have the vision to check out all the rumors and innuendo concerning the murmurings of U.F.O. sightings, but they had the wherewithal to create an antidote to the enemy invasion even before the first itchy trigger finger was unleashed. Well before the aliens stuck out their green tongues and tossed the first stone at our fragile glass house, A.I. already had an answer to genocide; don't cry uncle, cry HAVOC. Okay, cry foul.

What the game lacks in sensible backdrop, it more than makes up for in gameplay. Not only is the frame rate smooth as glass on a testbed P60 machine but the engrossing musical score and deafening sound effects further illustrate where Hollywood has pulled over on the entertainment superhighway and Silicon Valley has taken over. Each of the inviting levels display exceedingly crisp graphics, tied in characteristically to the mission at hand. Apart from the normal viewing and movement planes, the player character can also look up and down, jump and even fly using his quickly exhaustable jump jets.

Although it takes some getting used to, **CyClones** uses the mouse for targeting acquisition/item manipulation and the keypad for movement. Clumsy at first, the design, in retrospect, makes sense considering the latitude of movement available.

Another novel enhancement altogether overlooked in other automapping capable shooters was the extremely helpful tactical display. Essentially, a player can access a panoramic viewing mode of other portions of previously mapped regions. The player can thus determine his or her location rapidly, relative either to the starting position and/or to the mission parameters invoked at scenario startup.

Earth six zillion, aliens zero

Apart from the glaring omission of head-to-head play, the overacting Hollywood hopefuls and the rather paltry attempt at storyline, there's little else to fault in **CyClones**. Keep in mind you'll need at least some mid-ranged 486 horsepower to save humanity, but once you're up to warp speed there's no turning back.

Remember, humanity's at stake. If first-person shooters satiate your appetite for destruction, then your first stop at the intergalactic gunshop ought to be to procure some body armor and a bandolero stuffed with **CyClones**. Beyond that, everything else is optional.❑

Marc Dultz

Designed by: Raven Software
Published by: Strategic Simulations, Inc.
Systems: IBM PC
Graphics: 256 color VGA
Supports: Keyboard, joystick, mouse
Sound Support: Soundblaster and compatibles, Roland Sound Canvas

Squeeze the trigger and let fly!

Look before you leap

Top 5 Action
1. DOOM
2. DOOM 2
3. Dark Forces
4. Heretic
5. CyClones

Top 5 Arcade
1. Microsoft Arcade
2. Tetris Gold
3. Pinball Fantasies
4. Lode Runner
5. Cannon Fodder

BLAKE STONE

REVIEW

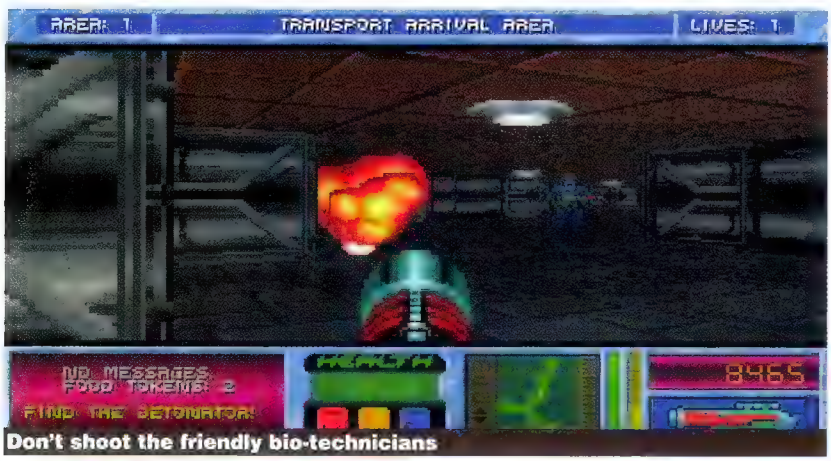
In **Blake Stone - Planet Strike (BSPS)**, the player returns as futuristic British secret agent Blake Stone, once again hot on the trail of an evil madman bent on unleashing untold horror upon an unsuspecting universe. The evil madman in this case is Dr. Goldfire, who has been hard at work building an army of killer mutants on the planet Selon. Stone's mission, if you decide to boot this game, is to infiltrate the doctor's base, wreak untold havoc, and put an end to the villain's wretched schemes, once and for all. Naturally, should you or any part of your computer be captured or rebooted during this adventure, our customer support department will deny all knowledge or your activities.

If you're familiar with other first-person perspective games, you won't have much of a learning curve to get into **BSPS**. The player moves around the halls of the enemy base, killing the bad guys, picking up ammo and other fun things, finding secret doors, and blowing things up. The object of the game is to battle your way through the 20 levels of the base on your way to your final confrontation with the evil Dr. Goldfire. There's a teleporter at your disposal, but a security cube on each level prevents your progress to the next level until you destroy it.

Standing in your way are an impressive array of thugs, bent on making you miss your doctor's appointment. They range from lab technicians to your usual horde of expendable guards to a variety of aliens, cyborgs and mutants. They all have differing modes of attack. Finally, you can't just go around blasting away at everything that moves because several of the bio-technicians are friendly. They'll give you food, ammo, information and bonus points if you manage to keep them alive. How do you tell the difference between a friendly and unfriendly 'tech? Well, now, that's the hard part.

I found the game play to be an excellent example of what can be done with the **Wolfenstein** engine. The graphics scroll smoothly, and several characters can be on the screen at once during even the most intense combat without the game slowing down. While the texturing of the walls is nowhere near as advanced as you'll find in **Doom**.❑

Nick Svolos



Don't shoot the friendly bio-technicians

Designed by: Jam Productions
Published by: Formgen
Systems: IBM PC

NOVASTORM

Oh boy...another futuristic society where the evil computer network has taken over. Somebody must have spilled coffee on the central network access node, because somehow in this society which relies far too much on technology, all hell is about to break loose and...well, you get the idea. And now it's up to you, you nameless, faceless corporate grunt, to get your binary butt into the cockpit and somehow save the entire solar system. Never mind the suspension of logic that permits a morphed, computer-linked universe to mishandle the rebellious attempt of one punk flyboy. Hey, you want plot, get a writer!

Novastorm does feature silky smooth graphic action as your Scavenger craft screams through trenches and across beckoning terrain. Belching fire and gas or covered with innocent looking polar caps, the landscape can be both treacherous and a haven of refuge for the pilot. Suddenly, the hum of your engines is broken by the screaming whine of enemy craft as they blister past you, firing rounds off their six in an attempt to turn you into Cyber dust! You bob, you weave, you fire back, hoping to survive long enough to make it one level closer to the motherlode.

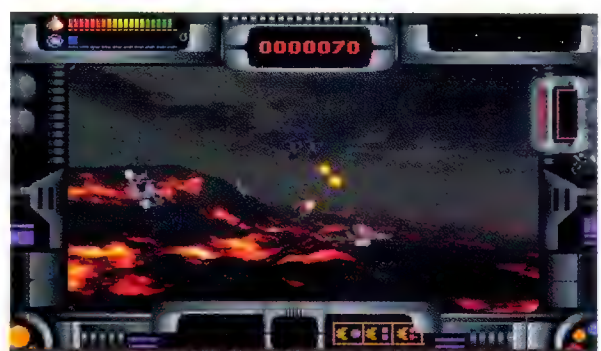
And on it goes. Outside of the limited plot set-up about saving the world and the information you are able to glean from your onboard computer, it's onwards and upwards for you in a kill or be killed mission. Although initially armed with a cannon and a pair of smart bombs, better weaponry is available as you proceed and get more kills. Enemy ships and installations that are destroyed sometimes leave valuable cargo or precious metals in their wake. The pencil pushing geeks back at HQ have installed a Capture System to scoop up this booty (medallions appear onscreen which the player must steer into) and voila, the little guys with no tans have immediately installed better weapons on your ship (signalled by icons on your control panel and a voice alert). Hey guys, how about a cold Heineken?

There are four main worlds, each with multiple levels, at the conclusion of which is a Guardian. These Guardians are usually heavily defended stations where special tactics are necessary (think of them like the poor man's Death Star) to penetrate them and proceed to the next world. Opposition is increasingly difficult as the game progresses, but initially it's a matter of moving out of the way.

An (early) preview of the game by another writer stated that **Novastorm** "...shames **Rebel Assault**." which would be a nice compliment if it were 1993.❑

Bill Holmes

Designed by: Psygnosis
Published by: Psygnosis
Systems: PC CD-ROM



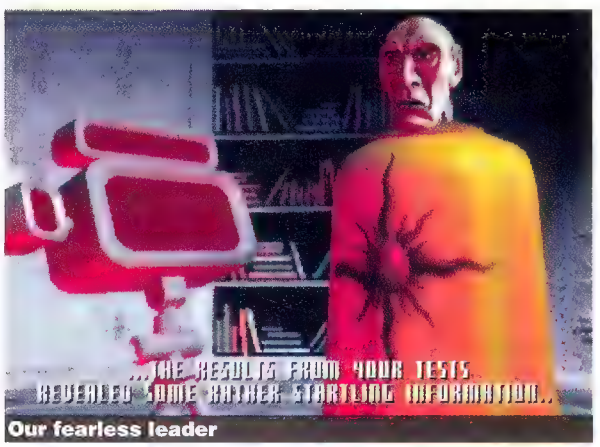
Landscapes can be treacherous and a place a refuge

Attack or run?

REVIEW

INFERNO

What happens when you take 1 part **Wing Commander**, 1 part **Star Crusader**, and mix in a HEAVY dose of grade B science fiction movies (take your pick of the worst lip-synched wonders ever produced)? You get **Inferno**, of course! **Inferno** is the latest title from *Digital Image Design (DID)*, the developers of **TFX**. **Inferno** places you in the position of being the "one-and-only" hero of humanity as you battle the attacking Rexxon empire. This mini-space opera (the developers claim there are over 16,000 possible game permutations with some 29,000 words of spoken dialog) owes much to the ever popular grade B Sci-Fi movies of old. The acting is overly melodramatic, the lip synching is *way* off, and the Rexxons are hideous beasts whose main goal in life is to kill you and take over the Universe. If you're a grade B Sci-Fi buff like me, **Inferno** is wonderful! I really wanted to complete each mission in order to see the cutscenes. As good as these cinematic effects are, there still is a game to play and herein may be a problem.



Our fearless leader

Despite its claim **Inferno** is hardly a space simulator, but then again neither are **X-Wing** or **Wing Commander**. Only *MicroProse's* **Mantis** ever attempted to model Newtonian physics in a space combat simulator, and we all know how playable **Mantis** turned out to be. So, if **Inferno** isn't a space simulator, in the strict sense of the word, how does it stand-up to the likes of **X-Wing**, **Tie Fighter**, or the **Wing Commander** series? The flight controls, weapons selection, and navigation displays are not intuitive, but extended play make them useable. However, the joystick control, at least in the beta version this review is based on, is a real pain in the neck. The joystick fire buttons do *not* fire any weapons; rather, they control the speed of your spacecraft! The spacebar fires the weapons. Talk about coordination problems!

My other complaint with **Inferno** is that everything happens too fast — really! The Rexxon craft fly by so fast that this space simulator veteran just couldn't draw a bead on them. Fortunately, there is an auto-combat option that will align your craft on your targets' six, but then where is the fun in that?

On the positive side, the missions in **Inferno** are about as varied as I have ever seen. You start the game by selecting one of 3 play modes: The Directors Cut, Evolutionary or Arcade. The Directors Cut is a campaign style mode where all the strategic decisions are made for you. The Evolutionary mode gives you the chance to plan all the action. The Arcade mode is, well, just that, but even in this mode *DID* put in a lot of cutscenes to help set the mode. The actual missions involve the standard variation of reconnaissance, escort, and seek-and-destroy missions; however, mission goals can change dramatically as the action unfolds. Fortunately, you have stolen some alien technology that will allow yourself to be "put back together again"

Inferno is one of the few games on the market that I would buy just for the cutscenes. The game play is varied and interesting, but just a little too arcade-like for my tastes. If you are a grade B Sci-Fi fan or just like combat space simulators, **Inferno** will take your breath away.❑

Alan Fusco

Designed by: Digital Image Design Limited
Published by: Ocean Software Limited
Systems: PC CD-ROM

LEMMINGS CHRONICLES

The original **Lemmings** was released in 1991 and was an immediate hit on all of the platforms it was released for. It has since become a classic, and has spawned two sequels, this particular one calling itself **The Lemmings Chronicles**, which finds our stupid little friends traipsing across their magic world trying to survive 90 new levels.

The classic lemmings in all their moronic glory

The lemmings are now larger and better animated. The classic lemmings still look the same, with their green hair flowing in the wind, but the shadow lemmings creep along in their ninja suits while the Egyptian lemmings strut around like Steve Martin's King Tut. The CD version of the game features some impressive cinematic animations and CD-audio background music.

The interface has been revamped in this installment, with five skill icons handling all lemming control. The skills all lemmings can use are walk, block, jump, use, and drop. The walk icon is especially useful, as it will cause the lemming to stop whatever it's doing and start walking in its original direction (no more blowing up the blocking lemmings). Another benefit of it is that it will change the direction of any walking lemming.

The use and drop icons are the ones that make the most difference in this version. The lemmings will pick up tools on the screen, and once they have them selecting this icon will cause the lemming to use it. The tools include a bomb, grenades, suckers that can be used to scale walls and attach to ceilings, a weapon for dealing with the bad guys you may meet up with, a spade (once you select a tool, you can now choose any direction to use it in), a bag of bricks for building ramps and traversing chasms, swimmers, clocks (for increasing the time required to finish the level), and the usual lemming umbrella. The number of things the lemmings can do has been greatly reduced from **Lemmings 2**, but this new interface adds a new challenge to the game.

This new challenge is also the main problem with **The Lemmings Chronicles**. Part of the beauty of the original game was the simplicity of play. The new game, like the sequel, is more complicated, and as it gets more complicated it starts to lose some of its charm. Despite that, it's really hard not to like the game, as it's just so damn cute, the puzzles remain challenging, and you still end up playing the game for too many hours. So go out and buy the silly thing, you lemmings.❑

Steve Bauman

Designed by: DMA Design
Published by: Psygnosis
Systems: IBM PC, PC CD-ROM

RISE OF THE TRIAD

Rot" is a word often used to describe something buried in the ground or an old piece of food sitting in a fridge, but it's not usually associated with a computer game. This time around, **ROTT** (with an extra T) is an acronym, which, when expanded, stands for **Rise of the Triad**, a new first-person 3D action game from *Apogee Software* in Garland, Texas. As the game has been dubbed the "most violent" ever, it's rather ironic that the acronym is so appropriate to the subject matter of this 3D action feast, as there are many rotting corpses lying around the playfield. Although few 3D games have even started to approach the quality of **DOOM**, this game rekindles many memories I had when first experiencing **DOOM** almost a year ago.

Designed by former *id* creative director Tom Hall, there are many features here that fans of the 3D genre have come to know and love, but at the same time the game is also highly original in conception and execution. This is just one of the many 3D games now hitting the market, but unlike other lackluster efforts, the designers have started out with a fresh cauldron, and added all the right ingredients to create a result which is unique and highly original.

The plot

Although most *Apogee* games have a plot which isn't even worth describing, **ROTT** is a departure, in the sense that the concept is feasible this time around. A disgruntled Hollywood pyrotechnic expert joins forces with an underground cult and plans to blow up Los Angeles if you can't stop him! You'll suit up as a member of HUNT, the High-risk United Nations Taskforce, and battle against the cult's aide-de-camp soldiers and accomplices. You will no doubt want to be crowned the king of the bloody 3D jungle of adrenaline pumping action, but you must fight your way through over 30 long and traitorous levels. The levels call for more puzzle-solving skills than most 3D games, so the action is slightly less intense, but the final victory is more rewarding.

Blood is mentioned above, and the developers have touted this game as the "most violent ever," and suffice to say, they weren't lying. From flying eyeballs to gushes of red blood adorning walls, this is one messy game. *Apogee* appears to understand that guts and flying limbs aren't for everyone, so they have included a password-protected violence level toggle. So now, wary players can enjoy the game, minus the excessive red pixel animation!

Tried and true triad

Once the game actually starts to unfold, it's very apparent that the 3D engine here is not up to par with **DOOM**. All the walls are at 90 degree angles, whereas **DOOM** could have walls at any angle, but in my opinion the developers have done something better: they've created a truly interactive environment. For instance, there are lights and torches along the walls, and players can actually shoot at these ancillary lights. When they do, the lights will explode, and the room will darken. Props such as plants, tables and statues burst into rubble when bullets hit their surface. Additions such as firejets, which shoot out fire, and jump-pads, more commonly known as mini-trampolines, are other features worth mentioning that really add to the overall experience.

Be there or be square

Although the level architecture and wall textures are disappointing at times, this is understandable, as the designers could only work with virtual lego blocks (i.e. all 4 sided rectangles). Still, a wonderful atmosphere does exist, with digitized human enemies, over 13 weapons, and copious secret features included. Some favorite reviewer features include mercury mode, which lets you fly like a bird, and the dog mode, which turns you into a barking dog. These features are great fun to play over the network or modem, and especially on a network, as the game supports up to 11 simultaneous players in combat. Multiplayer **ROTT** games include "Capture the Triad," a cyber version of Capture the Flag.

God mode -- yes, you can kill everything!

After all is said, done, and killed, **ROTT** could be called a 3D truffle: the outer coating of pre-**DOOM** technology is nothing special, but inside lies an original, "sweet," and highly addictive game. Playing this game is the switch that detonates a truly triumphant and explosive array of guts, mayhem, and in-your-face 3D action, suspended in an interactive 3D environment reaping with thrills, chills and blood spills. Sounds exciting, doesn't it? Unquestionably it is, and intensely enjoyable as well!❑

Geoff Keighley

REVIEW

Designed By: Tom Hall/Apogee
Published By: Apogee/FormGen
Systems: IBM, CD-ROM
Graphics: VGA
Sound: All Major Sound Cards
Supports: Mouse, Joystick, GamePad, Modem, Network

Does anyone have an umbrella?

Dog mode -- man's best friend?

REVIEW

THE FORTRESS OF DR. RADIAKI

Games often take creative license in their creation, but **The Fortress of Dr. Radiaki** from *Merit Studios* is a concept even wilder than Willy Wonka could invent. This first person 3D adventure somehow centers around a mad scientist named Dr. Radiaki and an island he owns in the Pacific. Radioactive material has been traced back to his Island. You need to go and battle fists with him and his clan to settle this matter once and for all. The enemies range from mundane ninjas to freaky bodies with toasters for heads.

The action starts off in a garden on the Island, then proceeds inside to the sewer system, and eventually into Radiaki's fort. The game allows for travel between levels, so the ending result is one gigantic world that interconnects. The concept would have worked well if it weren't for the terrible loading time for each level from the CD-ROM. On my 486/50, levels took at least a minute to load, which is unacceptable, especially considering the 3D technology used, and the fact that 8 megs of ram is required. Just to demonstrate the poor programming, it takes about 7 seconds to switch between weapons, which range from bats to swords to machine guns.

Speaking of the technology, although I had heard rumors that **Radiaki** was going to include stunning Super VGA graphics, it appears the developers have dropped support for such a feature. The 3D technology here is very poor, with no variance in the height of rooms. What I can't seem to understand is why the engine runs so slowly, despite its inferior technology. When walking around, I often thought I was dragging a U-Haul truck behind me, because the movement really chugs along at a slow pace. Thus, the controls are very hard to master, and there is no joystick support, although *Merit* is working on a patch which should address these control problems.

Admittedly the 3D rendered characters do look nice, and there are some pleasant sound effects. Unfortunately, unlike other 3D games, this title made me dizzy because the maps are very illogical, and the textures, such as lattice and bamboo, are extremely confusing to the eye. In this day and age of so many exciting 3D first person adventures showing up on the market, Dr. Radiaki's fort is quickly annihilated because of a lack of technology and poor gameplay.❑

Geoff Keighley

Shubbery and suicide: The perfect combination

Designed by: Maelstrom and Future Vision
Published by: Merit Studios
Systems: IBM Floppy, CD-ROM

ROYAL FLUSH

As pinball games go, **Royal Flush**, *Amtex'* latest plunger and flipper classic based upon a D. Gottlieb & Co. design from the 70's, certainly leads the pack in terms of photo-realistic gameplay and surreal sound effects. Not only does the computerized version mimic the infamous electro-mechanical pinball fave to a T, but a host of off-screen options left me wondering why I'd ever want to play the original again (I fondly remember my college days, popping endless quarters into both **Royal Flush** and another coin-eater, **Duotron**).

Not only can players tinker with the angle of inclination, but they can also toggle the point thresholds, flipper strength, recoil of the slingshots and thumpers and the ball count. *Amtex* has even provided a tournament option which locks down the game mechanics to a predetermined mode considered to be the expert level. Variable nudge and tilt sensitivities are also included as well as a stationary or scrolling play field. All things considered, *Amtex* earns itself an A+ not only for the physical model and aesthetics, but for the level of detail apparent from the manual to the play field.

Although the game is far and away a near-perfect simulation of electro-mechanical pinball action, I can't help but question the game's overall appeal, considering the fact that only one table is provided. To draw an analogy, it's sort of like playing a game of such magnitude as **TIE Fighter** but being limited to the flying of a gunboat. To get to the point, *Amtex'* approach of highlighting a single game (especially when compared to the tact adopted by such other notable computer pinball competitors as *Epic* and *21st Century Entertainment*) leaves a lot to be desired. Sorta defeats the purpose of walking into a flickering, smoke-filled pinball parlor, if you can't try out more than one machine, doesn't it?❑

Marc Dultz

When Pong was but a concept, pinball ruled

Designed by: Amtex
Published by: Amtex
Systems: PC CD-ROM

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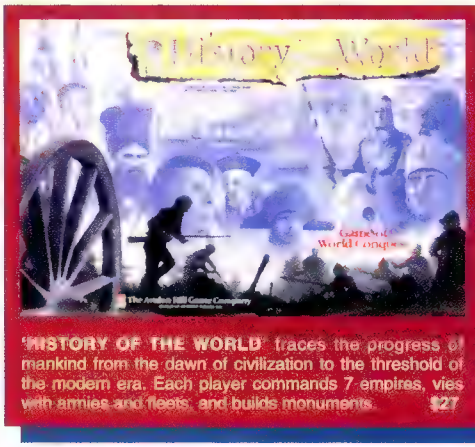
'WARHAMMER 40,000' is more than just the game in the box, it's an entire hobby supported with a huge range of supplements, boxed sets and blister packs of miniatures. Includes hundreds of different models. $67



'HISTORY OF THE WORLD' traces the progress of mankind from the dawn of civilization to the threshold of the modern era. Each player commands 7 empires, vies with armies and fleets, and builds monuments. $27

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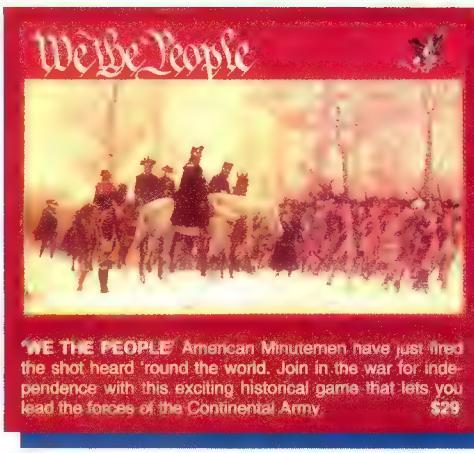

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Bill Holmes dodges tackles, turns a double play and does multimedia

Review

Unnecessary Roughness '95

Accolade

I know that Marv Levy does commercials for another product, but this is the game he should have endorsed. Why? Last year the first **UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS (UR)** was released by *Accolade* and showed a great deal of promise. Rather than push the envelope over the past year and dare the competition to keep pace, **UR95** is the same basic game with a few new twists. Or, in Marv-ese, Thurman off-tackle right instead of off-tackle left.

Granted, some companies don't even have a "Thurman" to begin with. *Sport Accolade* is focused on the playability of their products as the primary objective, and the game is fun to play. With improved camera maneuverability, better animation and some new eye candy in the stats section, **UR95** is tailor-made for head to head matchups at one computer. The play-calling interface is easy to use, most key parameters can be preset and even adjusted during the game, and the procedures are intuitive enough that anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of the game could play it out of the box. Even the computer can be set to play as a novice or an expert, and clock management, player control and passing method will differ depending on the selected settings. While some of this defies reality, it does make the game more accessible.

Along with the limitless camera angles is the "helmet cam," a through-the-facemask view that can even be shown split-screen with the field action or an opposing player's "helmet cam." I'd lose consciousness viewing an entire game like this, but it's a great toy to play with on occasion, especially on replays.

I am also a fan of the play design and playbook features. Modifying or creating plays is fairly simple, and the playbook storage method makes your in-game decisions simple and efficient. Pages of diagrammed plays literally "flip" as you tab from one to the next, and up to ten playbooks can be at your disposal on each side of the ball. The stock plays for the NFL teams are pretty good; even better are the "NFL Star Plays" modelled after Emmitt Smith counter traps or Sterling Sharpe post patterns. Best yet is the feature where plays can be weighted for use in certain situations in coaching profiles.

Unnecessary Roughness '95

So I am at once excited and frustrated by this game. Excited because, frankly, it's a great deal of fun to play. Frustrated, because it seems that with a little tweaking, all the little things that tick me off could probably be fixed up, smoothed over or removed from sight so that I could have that fun I was talking about a moment ago.

Last year, when reviewing **UR**, I pounded them for the insane scores and stats that simmed games generated. Well, the scores are down this time, but three simmed seasons all came up with teams averaging over 110 plays per game, running backs with 4000+ yards, safeties with 400+ tackles and no sacks and QBs with numbers that would humble Air McNair. So while the fancy new "League Leader" newspaper feature has digitized photos, under them are cartoon stats. I did find that scores and stats were much more realistic if there were at least one human player, so whether the fault is in the playcalling or the ratings remains to be seen. I think it's the latter, as I also noticed a remarkable dearth of two-point conversion attempts.

More nits: when simulating a week of games, the four quarters of a game and the time clock speed along until resolution, when the score is moved alongside the teams' names and the winner's helmet is displayed. No possession indicator by the yard marker nor fifth quarter space for overtime contests, though. After a week is over, you can research the old scores, but not the stats for each individual game - only the present week is accessible. Unless you manually save each game's results, you must rely on the team and League stats screens. On the field, the animation is better, but sometimes it still appears that players "drop dead" on the field instead of getting knocked over by contact.

After the flood of sports titles this year, I have arrived at the following conclusion. If you want stats and results that mirror the professional sport you enjoy, be prepared to sacrifice some or all of the graphic representation on the screen. If you want to enjoy the spirit of playing or coaching the game, be prepared to accept the fact that you as Jerry Rice is going to be a lot more "you" than "Jerry". Despite the NFL and NFLPA licenses, until those ratings and profiles are brought into line, **UR95** will only be in that second group.

Review

ESPN Baseball Tonight

Sony Imagesoft

Hum the theme song from cable TV's *ESPN BASEBALL TONIGHT* to any real baseball fan and a big grin will instantly spread across his or her face. Imagine booting up a computer game and having that wonderful fanfare blast out of your computer while a montage of images cascade across the screen. Hell, that's worth ten bucks right there and we haven't even hit the game yet...

When I first heard of the project, I didn't even expect there to be a game at all. I anticipated lots of historical stats, some great clips, and maybe even some Chris Berman nicknames. What *Sony Imagesoft* has done is take an updated version of **TONY LARUSSA BASEBALL 2** and revamp the interface to make it a faster, cleaner game. Good news for **TONY2** fans -- those turf hops are now a rare sight, although the 400-foot singles are still around and every home run graphic still shows a right handed white man.

If you liked **TONY2**, you'll love **ESPN**. The batting practice now has two lists - pitchers and hitters. Simply click and drag one of each into the center area, and voila - the matchup of your choice. Same with lineups and schedules, too; set the calendar to any date to see what's up on that

Top 5 Sports

1. FPS FOOTBALL PRO
2. PGA TOUR GOLF 486
3. ULTIMATE FOOTBALL
4. ESPN BASEBALL TONIGHT
5. FPS BASEBALL

ESPN Baseball Tonight

day, and even simulate up through that part of the schedule with a mouse click. Accessing the bullpen options and team menus during the game is easier than before, and the player stats toggle between historical and season numbers. Trades are likewise simple to enact.

On the field, the look is the same, even the beautiful stadiums (although not all of them are included with the game). The stat graphic in the foreground updates the batter through the results of his last plate appearance, and it looks like a television broadcast. Dan Patrick calls the play by play, and it is seamless — without a doubt the smoothest announcing in a computer game yet. His fans will enjoy hearing the trademark call of " ...the whiff!" Chris Berman is relegated to introducing the games from the studio, and since no player is called by name, there are none of his infamous "nicknames".

Although primarily designed as an arcade game, ***ESPN*** even played out realistically when simulating seasons. Except for one glitch (Atlanta's Oliva had a monster season which was traced back to his typographical 1.889 historical BA), the leaders and division winners were logical and believable. Sorting and reviewing the leaders, real or simulated, bears this out. There is a lot of control on and off the field, from the double switch to the management through injury, but one glaring omission is the boxscore. As in there are no boxscores! This is inexcusable in any baseball game and had better be *Sony Imagesoft*'s A- priority for any updates.

If you can live without the boxscore, as I grudgingly do for now, add this to your list. ***ESPN*** takes **TONY2**, which was a great but flawed game, cleans it up and packages it in an inviting multimedia presentation. It's intuitive to work with, fun to play and is realistically challenging. It is by no means the perfect game, but while we wait for that game to arrive, why not enjoy ourselves?

Review

Microsoft Complete Baseball
Microsoft Complete Basketball

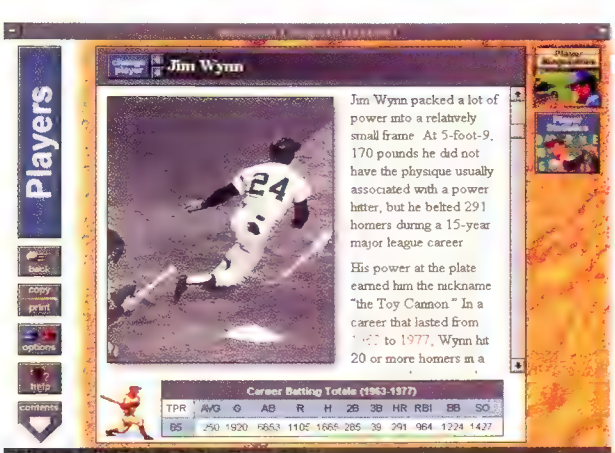
Microsoft

As if they needed the money and critical acclaim, the *Microsoft Home* line of products has furthered the reputation of the parent company with a staggering series of encyclopedic and reference titles covering everything from movies to dinosaurs. Following the initial dip in the sports pool (**COMPLETE BASEBALL**), the **COMPLETE BASKETBALL** title has just been released, and there are promises of more sports titles to come.

Outside of a trivia game within the programs, there isn't anything here to "play", but true sports fans will spend hours upon hours browsing through the nooks and crannies within these CD-ROM walls. Using the standard Windows™ interface, past and present events can be researched and experienced through audio and video clips, biographies and reams of statistics. The cross referenced lists enable the user to pick out a favorite team, player, or moment and either nibble a quick bite of information or dig in for details. Many of the terms and names in the articles are also hot-keyed so that infinite tangents can be explored. If just browsing through without a specific target, one can scan a past season for standings, stats and featured articles. Naturally, everything can be printed to text files or hard copy for convenient retrieval.

The trivia games are fun to play either as a competitive exercise or just another method of learning facts about the sport. Topics can be specific or random, and the scoring method is amusing (three wrong baseball answers is a strikeout; missing a basketball question is a "brick", guessing correctly is a "swish"). Another bonus is a daily "paper", available by modem at an additional surcharge per issue. In a nutshell, the "Baseball Daily" or "Basketball Daily" provides the up to the minute results, stats, schedules and insider information. By selecting this option from the menu, the newsletter is downloaded by modem to your computer. With *Microsoft* set to unveil both Windows 95 and an online network in 1995, this is a taste of things to come from them.

COMPLETE BASEBALL and **COMPLETE BASKETBALL** may not be the "last word" on their topics - like any reference work, there are subjects that are not covered in as much depth as others. Leave those complaints for the perfectionists and buy these titles if you have any interest in the games of basketball and baseball. Like they do with every topic they cover, *Microsoft Home* has somehow crammed a world of information into a well organized presentation and even put a reasonable price tag on it. No sports fan should be without these products, and I look forward to the rest of the series with great anticipation.❑


Players
Jim Wynn
Jim Wynn packed a lot of power into a relatively small frame. At 5-foot-9, 170 pounds he did not have the physique usually associated with a power hitter, but he belted 291 homers during a 15-year major league career.
His power at the plate earned him the nickname "the Toy Cannon." In a career that lasted from
to 1977, Wynn hit 20 or more homers in a
Career Batting Totals (1963-1977)
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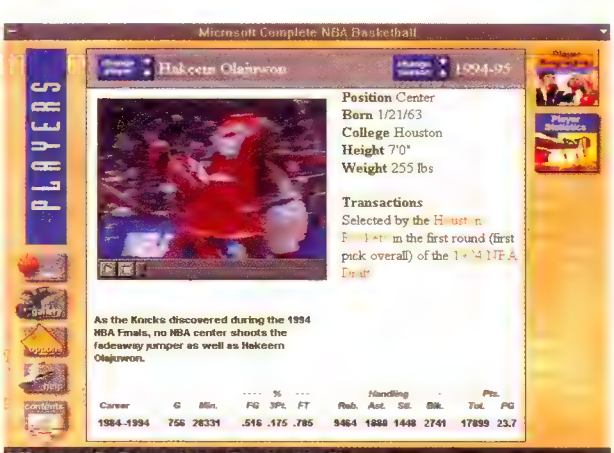
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Hakeem Olajuwon
1994-95
Position Center
Born 1/21/63
College Houston
Height 7'0"
Weight 255 lbs
Transactions
Selected by the Houston
in the first round (first pick overall) of the
Draft
As the Knicks discovered during the 1994 NBA Finals, no NBA center shoots the fadeaway jumper as well as Hakeem Olajuwon.
Career G Min. FG % 3Pt. FT Reb. Ast. Stl. Blk. Tot. PTS
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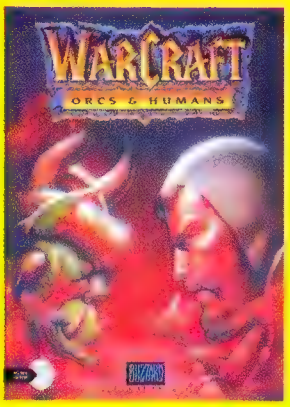

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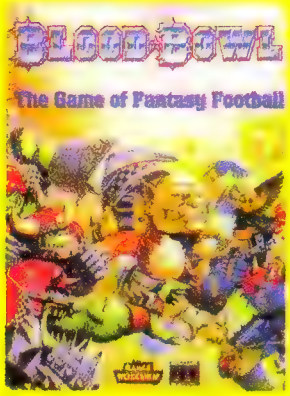

'BLOOD BOWL' A mighty roar fills the stadium as the players take to the field! Across the length & breadth of the Warhammer World, teams of armored warriors battle to the death in great arenas. Features league & season play, head-to-head modem play and astro-granite, grass or ice play fields. **CD $34**

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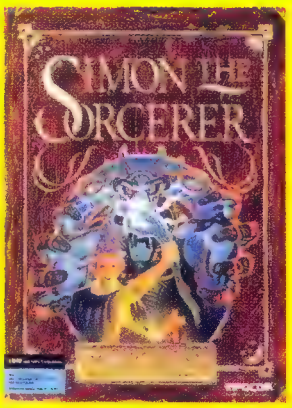

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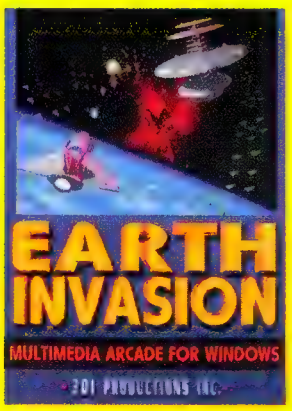

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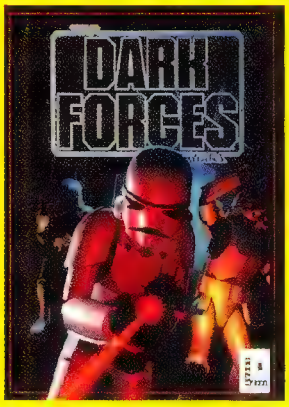

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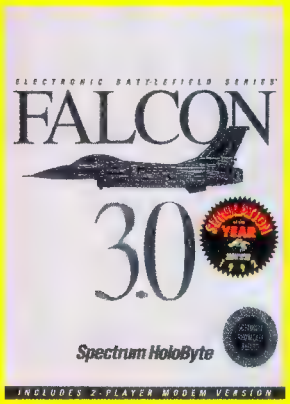

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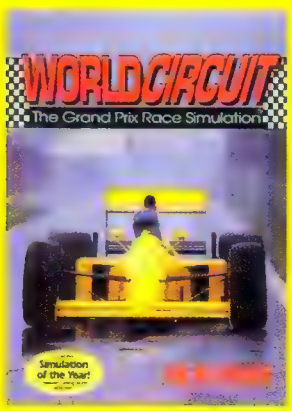

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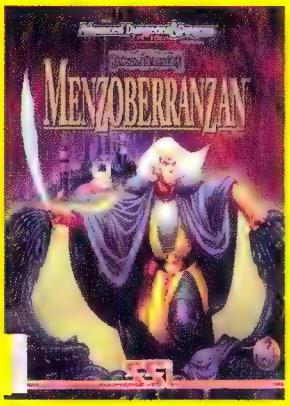

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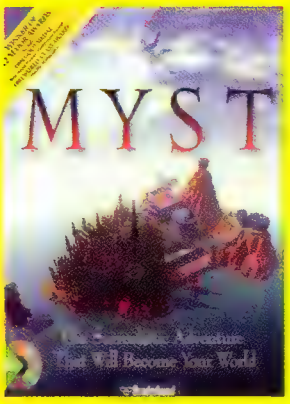

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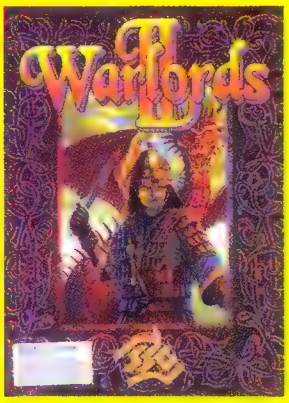

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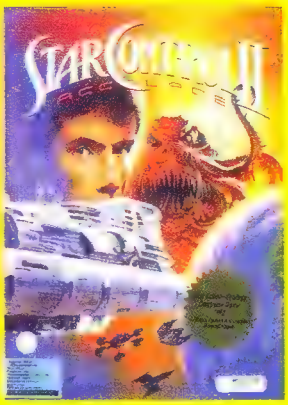

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REBOUND

Games are too hard!

Dear Editors,

When reviewing games you should also look at whether or not they can be completed by someone new to computers. I bought *LucasArt's* **X-Wing** and **Rebel Assault** and both of these programs ARE IMPOSSIBLE TO COMPLETE!! At the price I paid for these programs, I should be able to finish them, and as a result of this I will not buy any more games from *LucasArts*. With **Rebel Assault**, even when using a good computer you cannot fly straight.

If more people tell software writers and companies to get their acts together before putting titles on the market we may see a change. I'm guessing that **X-Wing** did not sell as well as it could have if it had been made easier.

Thank you for a very good magazine.
James Manship
Lexington, SC

Dear James,

Regarding your first point, it would be nearly impossible for us to determine who could or could not complete a game. What I find hard you may find easy, and vice versa. You may remember many years ago that Infocom *rated their games as Introductory through Advanced and the idea flopped because no one wanted games on either end of the spectrum, and if they couldn't finish the Introductory game they felt stupid.*

***Tie Fighter** is much easier than **X-Wing** was, though it's still no walk in the park.* LucasArts *has released a patch for **Rebel Assault** that improves the joystick control, but it's still not an easy game either.*

*If you have a modem, call around to some local BBS' or the major on-line services. You will find cheats for these games make you invincible and/or give you all of the available weapons. Companies are listening, though. Look at **Wing Commander III**: it has a built-in cheat mode allowing anyone to finish the entire game–Ed.*

Mrs. Wartofsky checks in

Dear *Strategy Plus*,

It's well-deserved pat-on-the-back time, gentlemen. I've been reading *S+* since its inception, and although your short-length, summary reviews sometimes lack the depth to give readers fair warning on what really are marginal titles, your magazine overall is exemplary.

The strategy articles alone are worth the cover price, and Mr. Baker's stuff is excellent. But what I've found most impressive about *S+* in recent months is that your Editor can actually write. In fact, I'd almost swear he was a J-school [erm, Journalism School? - we're not sure — we never went to college!] graduate. The writing of other "Editors" in the computer gaming industry varies from sophomoric to stilted at best.

I know something about writing editorials, after banging out more than 150 of them in my career. Mr. Wartofsky's style is good, and maintaining that level of creativity isn't easy, but there are many of us out there who appreciate the effort. Keep it up, Steve.

Ed.
Somewhere in Ohio

Dear Ed., or should I say Mrs. Wartofsky?

[Steve, we've told you to quit having your wife write letters to the magazine. It's getting embarrassing. Just kidding. This is a real letter. No, really. We mean it. We have the original to prove it! #$%@#$]

Take Two —

Dear Ed,

Steve Wartofsky responds: Thanks for the nice words! Without the regular, scathing, galling attacks I receive from my

ACCESS Brings You a Virtual World Interactive Movie!

What Reviewers are Saying :

"Lots of games claim to be pushing the envelope—*Under a Killing Moon* blows it to **smithereens!** "
—William Trotter, *PC Entertainment*

"*Under a Killing Moon*...the **most elaborate** graphic adventure to date. A ground breaking CD adventure!"
—Joyce Worley, *Electronic Games*

"*Under a Killing Moon* combines the best elements of movies and computer games and creates an amazing interactive experience that's **better than either of them** . It literally pulls you into the screen."
—Denny Atkin, Entertainment Editor, *Compute Magazine*

This category-creating Interactive Movie from ACCESS Software goes light years beyond any other product labeled "interactive." *Under a Killing Moon* takes you to the streets of post World War III San Francisco and casts you into the role of Tex Murphy, Private Investigator, who first appeared in *Mean Streets*, then *Martian Memorandum*. *Under a Killing Moon* is a Virtual World full of people and places so richly detailed, you'll feel like you're actually there.

cohorts on a daily basis nothing would ever get done, so kudos to them as well for pulling me kicking and screaming out of my dark, cold cave... [Note: the remainder of this thought was pulled to protect our tender readers.] On another note: we do wish that we could lengthen some of the shorter reviews, but tis the season to release every single piece of software all at once, and we'd prefer some coverage to no coverage. – Eds

And on that note...

Dear Editors,

What are the software companies thinking? I went to my local software store before Thanksgiving and there was nothing new. A week or so later it's full of all of these new games that I want to play, only, at anywhere from $50 to $80 a pop, I can't afford most of them. The real problem is that if I don't buy them now, they may not be on the shelf in five months when I can afford them.

I know that everyone wants to cash in on the Christmas rush, but this is ridiculous.

Disgruntled and impoverishedly yours,
Aaron Comesta
Pensacola, FL

*This is a serious problem that the companies are going to have to figure out how to overcome. What's going to happen is the games that are possibly even more worthy than the biggies are going to get overlooked (can anyone say **Ecstatica**?). What you may see is that some of these games will get re-launched with a big advertising campaign sometime in the spring. Stay tuned.*

Nose in the air

Dear Strategy Plus,

So now, along with ridiculously banal story lines in adventure games, ridiculously complicated controls in simulations, ridiculously stupid AI in wargames, we get added onto the latest round of releases ridiculously ludicrous acting jobs?! Gimme a break — and this is supposed to move computer gaming into the mass market?

I don't know where your heads are at, but as someone who's just recently taken a look at computer gaming I can sure find a lot of other more worthwhile things to do with my time!

My condolences to you all for being trapped in a medium which is still so incredibly geeky it would only appeal to someone who's still wearing a pocket protector long after it's become fashionable to do so. Get a life. Go to a movie. Play softball. Something!

Yours,
Anthony Debonniere
Moscow, ID

Dear Anthony,

Getting pretty cold up there this time of year, isn't it? Thank you for taking a moment to peek in, sniff and scratch; there are remote controls now for television which allow you to actually change the channel if you're not enjoying what you're viewing — we suggest you do the same for computer gaming. Let us know when you've finished the last volume of Remembrance of Things Past. *— Eds.*

If you've got something to say - say it!
Write to:
Strategy Plus
P.O. Box 5692
Burlington, VT 05402

Letters may be edited for space.

UNDER A
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Breach 3 from Impressions

and up to 12 players.

Vampire: The Masquerade and Ice & Fire: little was revealed regarding these two down the road titles, what is known is that the former is an adventure title from *White Wolf Entertainment* while the latter is a puzzle game from the inventors of **Tetris**.

GTE INTERACTIVE MEDIA

FX Fighter: This title is being developed by UK-based *Argonaut Software* (newly signed on as a licensee with *Microsoft*, by the way), creators of **Creature Shock**, and it utilizes their new *BRender* development tool that allows incredibly fast polygon animation. It is an amazing looking fighting game much like *Sega's* **Virtua Fighter**. Look for it in the second quarter of 1995.

Rapid Assault: This is *GTE's* **DOOM**. It's a first-person driving, action, kill everything in sight sorta thing that features a very smooth looking engine (no pun intended).

Tank Girl: Ack, run for your lives! Our favorite kangaroo lover is set to hit the screen and your computer in 1995. And she packs a mighty wallop...

I-MOTION

Alone in the Dark 3: Edward Carnby's latest adventure places him in the wild west. For more information, see our review of the French version of the game on page 76.

Chaos Control: This early 1995 release is a graphically spectacular CD-ROM arcade/adventure game in the **Creature Shock/Cyberia** mold.

A-IV Network$: This is an excellent-looking sequel to the *Maxis* title **A-Train**. You take over the A-IV Group, a global empire worth over four trillion dollars. It will be up to you to manage investment and negotiations, dabble in real-estate, schedule mass-transit operations and leverage buyouts.

Marco Polo: The legendary Silk Route is the setting for this adventure that allows the players to follow the path of Marco Polo himself as you try to amass gold and jewels while avoiding treachery and danger. Interspersed with the game will be video clips from the 1982 movie of the same name featuring Burt Lancaster and Leonard Nimoy. Look for it sometime in the second quarter of 1995.

Prisoner of Ice: This is the second **Call of Cthulu** adventure (the first was **Shadow of the Comet**). Gone are the somewhat mediocre graphics of **Comet**, replaced by sharp SVGA artwork. The game is inspired by the H.P. Lovecraft novel "The Mountain of Madness," and in it you will control Ryan, an American agent working with the British Royal Navy, through a serious of adventures and general weirdness that takes place all across the globe.

IMPRESSIONS

Front Lines: *Impressions* has succumbed to "graphic-itis" and for the first time will be incorporating *3-D Studio* rendered intros and segues to accompany their wargames. Due out imminently, if this futuristic hex based wargame plays as good as it looks then *Impressions* has a sure fire winner.

High Seas Trader: If swashbuckling is more your style then you may want to look into **High Seas Trader**. Players take command of a 17th century sailing ship, complete with a first-person viewing perspective, as they attempt to open trade routes all the while outmaneuvering dreaded pirates.

Breach 3: They're back and they're tougher than ever! Backward compatible with **Rules of Engagement**, **Breach 3** again follows the exploits of a futuristic squad of interstellar marines as they battle with a host of alien races.

INTERACTIVE DIGITAL DEVICES

PC Steering Wheel & Pedals: Look out *Thrustmaster*. This upstart is creating some incredibly good driving controllers (expensive ones, too). They have a steering wheel, pedals, stick shift, a steel mounting system, and all sorts of other techno-goodies.

INTERACTIVE MAGIC

Apache-Gunship: This serious Apache Longbow simulation was on display and looking quite good, with much of the design already implemented effectively enough to confirm that it's going to be one *killer* air combat sim. Spectacular terrain, in-depth flight modeling, accurate weapons and radar environment simulation, and detailed mission planning, along with a *much* more intuitive interface (supplemented with help on the CD) are likely to make this one of the best sims of 1995.

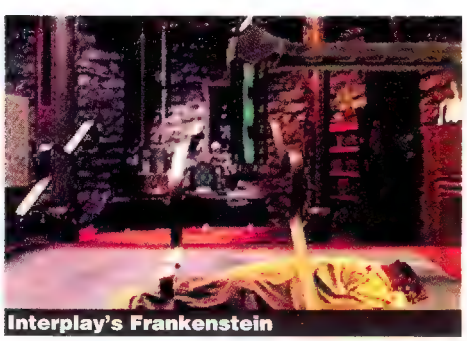
Exploration: The game is moving along nicely, and could be an interesting historical resource management/trading game, with economic features to rival even **Merchant Prince**.

INTERPLAY/MACPLAY

Frankenstein: Through the Eyes of the Monster: *You* are the monster in this non-linear interactive story. Tim Curry (there's no truth to the rumor that he, like Mark Hamill, will be in every game in 1996) plays Dr. Frankenstein, and you will find yourself in a fully rendered compound which features the castle, catacombs, gardens, and secret passages. You start the game on your back, literally, as a lightning strike signals the beginning of the game and your life. You will have to search for truth and your humanity as the monster while determining what path to take in the world. Look for it in late 1995 on both the PC and the Mac.

U.S.C.F. Chess: This is a chess program licensed from the *United States Chess Federation* with over 300,000 opening moves, great graphics, a tutorial, and an easy interface. It will be on both the PC and the Mac.

Virtual Pool: This was a surprisingly interesting looking title. It sports an engine that spins the table around to any perspective at 29


Interplay's Frankenstein

Dungeon Master II from Interplay

Interplay's Kingdom: The Far Reaches

FLIGHT UNLIMITED

LookingGlass proves the long wait will be worth it at their CES booth

Yes, yes, after all the carping and worrying it seems like after all is said and done, the folks at *LookingGlass* are going to come through for *both* flight sim grognards *and* the more general public with a design that's both easy to get into and respectful of the real-world physics of flight.

Who ever said two audiences couldn't be satisfied at the same time? **Flight Unlimited** has been getting much positive feedback in test — from real pilots who've been executing the kinds of acrobatic maneuvers they do in the real world in the software. Apparently this design is close enough to reality that it performs as expected during such maneuvers. Even a dear old acquaintance at CES — a CFAA Pilot Instructor and veteran of both real and simulated civilian flight — was giving the design a respectful thumbs up, though the no doubt valid comment was made that to do *all* the physics involved in doing a real fluid dynamics model, no home-based computer is really currently sufficient, so the fascinating question is, what's been put in? And what's been left out?

No matter, however, once most folks get a hold of **Flight Unlimited**'s joystick; our jaded simulation editor for instance carefully stifled a potential yawn at the booth and grabbed hold of the stick and started futzing around, and — well, a long while later, it became necessary to uproot him from in front of the damn thing. The software is truly a joy to fly, because the sensation of interacting with an in-depth terrain and atmosphere model is very, very tangible, very, very involving.

It doesn't hurt that the included scenery is incredibly beautiful as well. We were trying to execute a roll inverted into a deep canyon and gasping at how incredibly realistic the attempt seemed (yeah, the Grob crashed, oh well!). Skimming mountaintops will have you holding your breath.

Flight Unlimited

Flight Unlimited

frames per second (bleeargh!). You can see all of the tracking angles of a particular shot and it will also feature modem and network play. Look for it on the PC in the second quarter.

Conquest of the New World: This beautiful looking colonization game was being shown and it looked like a potential winner.

Stonekeep: This perennial trade-show favorite made yet another appearance at CES and it still looks pretty good. It's a first-person dungeon crawl with digitized and animated monsters and 13 levels to explore. It will theoretically be available in the first quarter of 1995.

Dungeon Master II: The Legend of Skullkeep: This sequel to the classic **Dungeon Master** (which is probably the most imitated CRPG in the last five years) hasn't upped the graphics over the previous versions but retains the classic interface. It still features the traps and puzzles that endeared the original to legions of *Amiga* users and it will be released for the PC and Mac in early 1995.

The Skins Game at Bighorn: *Interplay* enters **Links**world with this golf game, which features shot on film graphics and an easy to use interface. It also has fly by's and a wacky caddie. Look for it on the PC and Mac in the first quarter.

Kingdom: The Far Reaches: This is a cartoon adventure for the whole family that looks splendid in all of its full-motion video glory. Look for the PC version at the end of the first quarter.

SimEarth CD-ROM & SimAnt CD-ROM: These enhanced CD-ROM versions of the originals are virtual re-writes, which makes them possible candidates for repurchases by fans of the originals. We especially liked the disembodied ant head that serves as your tutor in **SimAnt**.

IVI PUBLISHING

ECO East Africa: This unique Windows-based CD-ROM simulation casts you in the role of the warden of Ethemba, a fictional East African Game park. Using a first-person viewpoint, you manage the park's ecosystem. It will feature photorealistic backgrounds and three-dimensional animated animals.

Louis Cat Orze - The Mystery of the Queen's Necklace: This well-researched Windows CD-ROM mystery adventure takes place in 17th century France and allows the player to try and recover the Queen's stolen necklace. All you have to help you are a young princess, the king's grandson, and a cat named Louis Cat Orze.

KOEI

Celtic Tales: Balor of the Evil Eye: This isometric map-board strategy game is set in medieval Ireland pitting you in a valiant attempt to reunite Ireland and fend off the armies of the Other World. Lots of wonderful detail enhances this CRPG-like quest to ascend to the vaunted rank of High Ruler of Eire.

Brandish: Utilizing a top down overhead view, this fantasy CRPG pits the player in a desperate quest to clear the player of murder all the while battling with the denizens of the underworld.

New Horizons: Set in the age of high seas exploration, **New Horizons** places the player in the role of either a Portuguese Duke, a Spanish female navy liuetenant, a British privateer, an Italian adventurer or a Turkish orphan. This breathtaking exploration game takes the player on a journey through over 130 exotic destinations.

The Skins Game at Bighorn from Interplay

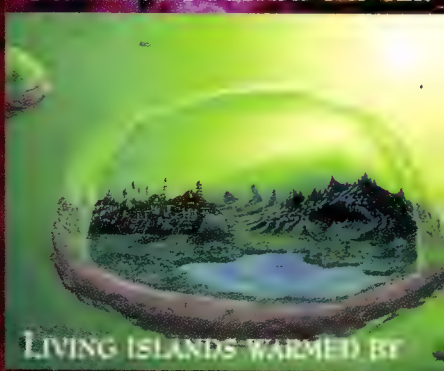
Legend Entertainment's Mission Critical

Terra Nova by Looking Glass Technologies

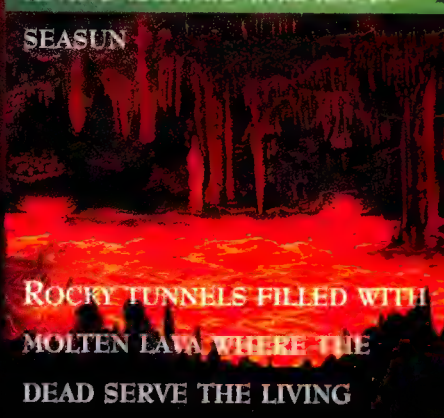
Death Gate

WORLDS OF ELVEN TREETOP SOCIETIES

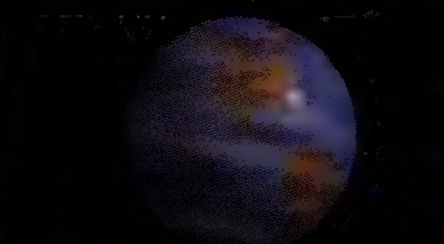
CONTINENTS FLOATING IN AIR



LIVING ISLANDS WARMED BY SEASUN



ROCKY TUNNELS FILLED WITH MOLTEN LAVA WHERE THE DEAD SERVE THE LIVING



ONE WORLD TORN ASUNDER

SEALED FOREVER BY THE DEATH GATE

- ✔ CD-ROM
- ✔ Super VGA
- ✔ Voice

"Underneath the beauty lies an adventure guaranteed to please even the most demanding fan"
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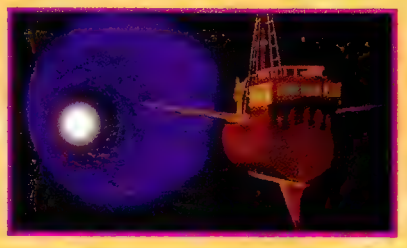
"Excellent" – Johnny Wilson, Computer Gaming World

"Mercedes quality with immense depth"
– Steve Wartofsky, Strategy Plus



LONG AGO AFTER CENTURIES OF WAR, THE SARTAN RACE SMASHED THE WORLD SEAL AND SUNDERED THE EARTH INTO SEPARATE MAGICAL REALMS, EACH SEALED FROM THE OTHER BY THE POWERFUL DEATH GATE.

✣ IN ISOLATION, MAGIC WAS CORRUPTED, KNOWLEDGE LOST AND THE COMMON HUMANITY THAT ONCE BOUND THE WORLD WAS FORGOTTEN. THE DEFEATED PATRYNS, TRAPPED IN THE NIGHTMARISH PRISON REALM OF THE LABYRINTH, BECAME TWISTED WITH HATRED AND PLOTTED THEIR REVENGE. ✣ BORN IN THIS SAVAGE AND UNFORGIVING LAND, YOU ESCAPE AND UNDERTAKE A NEW QUEST - TO FIND THE PIECES OF THE WORLD SEAL, WREAK REVENGE UPON THE SARTAN AND DELIVER YOUR PEOPLE FROM THE DAILY TORMENT OF THEIR LIVING HELL.

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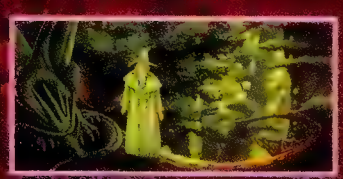
Super VGA preserves detail of original art by award-winning fantasy illustrators



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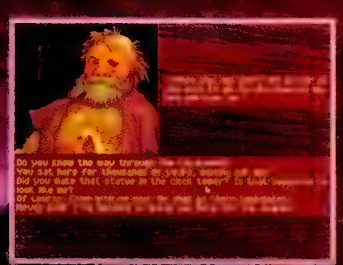

Weave together ancient runes to cast magical spells

Actual Super VGA graphics shown

Game design by Glen Dahlgren

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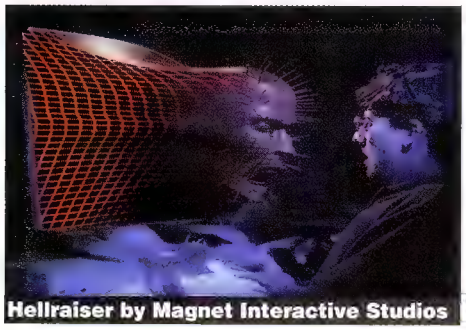
Hellraiser by Magnet Interactive Studios

Harvester from Merit

Merit's Fighter Wing

LEGEND ENTERTAINMENT

Mission Critical: We previewed this game last month, but in case you missed it this game is a science fiction adventure with stunning SVGA graphics and full rendered rooms with **7th Guest** style movement between locations. It features an excellent story that forces you to make a difficult choice and the ultimate question: what does it mean to be human?

Companions of Xanth 2: We learned that *Legend* will be producing a sequel to **Xanth** and it will no doubt feature the newer SVGA graphics of their newer titles.

LOOKING GLASS TECHNOLOGIES

Flight Unlimited: This long awaited acrobatic flight simulator will finally land on ecstatic gamers' desks around the time you are reading this. It's just the best looking and best flying flight simulator out there (assuming you meet the hardware requirements). See our *CES Highlight*.

Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri: This first-person simulation is slated for a mid-95 release. See the full preview on page 22 for more information on this interesting title.

LUCASARTS

Dark Forces: This long-awaited potential **DOOM**-killer turns out to be just that — an amazing first-person *Star Wars* action-adventure. It's Pentium-optimized (though it's customizable to run on a 386) 3D engine is superb, allowing full movement in all directions, jumping, ducking, and crawling. It should be out by the time you're reading this, so you'll already know how good it is.

Full Throttle: This incredible adventure is sure to be one to watch for in 1995. Look at the special CES highlight for more information.

Indiana Jones and his Desktop Adventures: This change of pace is a Windows-based story game that generates millions of varied, short game scenarios (and comes on, listen to this, one floppy disk). As Indiana Jones, you will find clues, discover treasures, and avoid Nazis in 1930's Mexico. Look for a full preview next month.

The Dig: This much anticipated adventure is still slated for release in the second half of 1995.

CES HIGHLIGHT

FULL THROTTLE

In **Full Throttle** you control Ben, a hard-core bike and leader of the Polecats, a biker gang, who is framed for the murder of Malcolm Corely, head of the company that makes the lean mean biking machines that Ben and his ilk ride. Separated from his gang and on the lam from the law, Ben must clear his name, find the killer, and keep the company alive that sustains his lifestyle, as it's being taken over by one Adrian Ripburger, who wants to turn it into a mini-van factory.

The game plays like **Sam & Max** in that it uses the newest SCUMM engine, with full-screen graphics and has no visible interface. There are times where the game incorporates the **Rebel Assault** INSANE (INteractive Streaming ANimation Engine) technology and you suddenly find yourself on Ben's motorcycle fighting rival gangs with 2x4's, chain saws, and crowbars as the ground races by (you can also choose to ignore them).

The artwork is completely unique, featuring some amazing looking motorcycles, limos, trucks, and a huge cargo plane. The characters are all large and cartoon-like, but they have a dark edge. The voice for Ben is perfect, and Mark Hamill (the rumor for 1996 is that he will appear in every game) will play the bad guy Adrian.

What *LucasArts* does better than anyone is to use a single graphic style and stick with it throughout. So many games lack any sort of artistic cohesion, moving schizophrenically from digitized video to rendered backgrounds to hand drawn art. The art in **Full Throttle** is especially amazing, considering the company is still using low-resolution artwork. Nothing at the show looks like **Full Throttle**, and nothing plays like it. Give it a ride in the first quarter of 1995.

Full Throttle

MAGNET INTERACTIVE STUDIOS

Hellraiser: Virtual Hell: This MPC title will allow gamers to hang out in Hell with the legendary Pinhead from Clive Barker's novels. This early 1996 title will find you doing battle in a cyber world with Pinhead and his cenobite apostles before they find their way out of a virtual computer world. It has some heavyweight talent behind it, including designer Doug Barnett (**Return to Zork**) and producer Vijay Lakshman (**Terminator Rampage**, **The Elder Scrolls: Arena**, and **Delta V**).

BLUESTAR: It is 2025 and you are a dolphin who thinks like a human and is traveling to BLUESTAR Space Station. You have to solve the mysteries of the station, and if you fail it's back to the circus for you.

MAXIS

Sim Isle: British game development house *Intelligent Games* was showing off their upcoming entry in the "Sim" series (see our preview elsewhere in this issue).

Baseball Pro Windows with Ernie Harwell Broadcast Pack: Miller Associates have updated their well regarded APBA baseball simulation with digitized commentary from baseball hall of famer Ernie Harwell. His crisp play by play announcing lends an incredible air to an already popular simulation.

MERIT

Harvester: This design is still a very long ways off; it remains a contender in the "interactive movie" genre, but it's also a serious question now whether it'll be releasing as first-generation technology alongside a bunch of new second-generation movie-style games.

Fighter Wing: Originally supposed to be a ground-breaking network play design, **FW** is now just a simplified sit and shoot single-player game (though networking is still being worked on for eventual addition).

G-Nome: It *looks* really pretty with its *3D Studio* art work, but **G-Nome** is entering a market quickly getting saturated with battling robot simulations.

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Nerves of Steel: This will hopefully be the last attempt anyone in the industry makes to produce yet another **DOOM** clone.

Alex Dampier World Hockey 95: With both arcade action and a stats model for 3200 players, this may prove to be an interesting hockey game, and the best of the CES lot for *Merit*.

MICROLEAGUE

Sports Illustrated Baseball 95: Combining some of the biggest names in the baseball business, **Sports Illustrated Baseball 95** should rival even **Front Pages Baseball** in its depth of game play. Not only will the rotoscoped graphics, 3-D rendered stadiums (from yesteryear and the present) and head-to-head modem play enhance the product but the game will include exhibition, league and season simulating capabilities.

Silverball Plus 2: You got it! The same fellas that rolled out the world famous pinball simulation **Silverball** are set to release its sequel. **Silverball 2** combines three of the original amazing tables with three all new tables.

Blood Bowl: Another of the board game turned computer ports, **Blood Bowl** represents a loose interpretation on futuristic football games (set in the **Warhammer** universe) where conflict is settled not on the battlefield, but in the arena.

MICROSOFT

Microsoft Baseball: Working with *Stormfront*, the designers of **Tony Larussa Baseball II**, *Microsoft* obviously has serious plans for an in-depth baseball simulation, emphasizing both stats and arcade-style play.

Flight Simulator 5.1: has both aesthetic and simulation realism improvements in store for **FS** fans, including significantly enhanced terrain details (Chicago does truly look photo-realistic from the air at this point!), significantly optimized frame rates, significantly improved flight modeling (particularly in the area of airfoil separations) and some improvements in the weather system (no more silly bit-mapped thunderheads). Most interestingly for IFR fans, visibility can be controlled to make spotting airports during approaches more of a challenge. Horizon hazing and cloud effects are much more realistic as well. The bottom line is increased graphic density, *and* increased smoothness — an exceedingly difficult combination to pull off.

Microsoft was also promoting a host of fascinating development tools that they'd love to see other game companies license. They've acquired *SoftImage*, a competitor with *Alias* for workstation-style high-res animation, and have some speedy tools to offer along those lines. And they're offering a solid object library for game design as well. Combine those with a system designed to make mixing of digitized and MIDI sound in-software, and ambitious plans to offer a virtually invisible multiplayer gaming/network/modem connect interface, and you've got a host of possibilities set up from the company for Windows-based gaming.

MILLENIUM

Diggers: What do you get when you combine **Lemmings** style of play with a thought provoking, intuitive premise? You get **Diggers** of course! Unearth the treasures of Zarg in a desparate race to reach the mother lode before the computer.

Flight Simulator 5.1 from Microsoft

MINDSCAPE

Legions: Empire: Hints abound concerning a micro miniature, ancients wargame due out later this year. We'll be sure to follow this story closely.

Code Red: This is a Windows-based first-person action/adventure designed by Jim Walls, of **Police Quest** fame. You are a terrorist expert who must retake a large boat and rescue the hostages. You can't shoot everyone, because some people will be hostages, though you never know if they will pull a gun on your and turn out to be a bad guy.

Warhammer, Warhammer 40K, and Aliens: *Mindscape* has secured the rights to produce games based on the comic book version of *Aliens*, and will be producing both a CRPG and an action title based on the two **Warhammer** game systems (for a total of four games).

NEW WORLD COMPUTING

Heroes of Might & Magic: This long delayed (looks like March, folks) strategy/adventure game takes some of the **Might & Magic** characters and plunks them down in the middle of a beautiful looking game reminiscent of **King's Bounty**, but more like **Warlords II** in play. It features resource management and combat as you try to travel throughout the world and dominate it.

Multimedia Celebrity Poker: This poker game features "legendary" comedian Joe Piscopo (the strongest comic in the world), Morgan Fairchild, and Jonathan Frakes in full-screen full-motion video as your opponents. It features eight variations of poker.

Wetlands: This action game takes place on a futuristic planet with two major cities and dozens of underwater facilities. It is a canned-background shoot'em up with loads of 3D rendered artwork. Look for it late in the first quarter.

MechLords: The Inner Circle: This July release will put the gamer in the seat of a noble in one of the houses that make up an interstellar empire. You must complete a series of missions such as establishing colonies, discovering new technologies, and engaging in battle with enemy forces. It is being developed by *Simtex*, creators of **Master of Orion** and **Master of Magic**.

D3: This is the working title of a new CRPG being done for *New* World by *DreamForge*, the company who did **Ravenloft**, **Menzoberranzan** and **Ravenloft II** for *SSI*. It's a first-person dungeon crawl with some superb graphics in the limited demo shown. Look for it late this year.

NOVALOGIC

Werewolf: Not much new was learned about this planned network

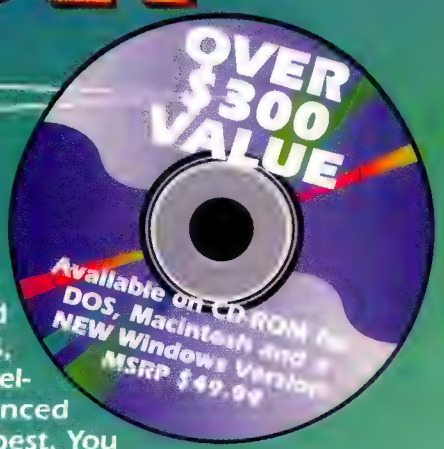
New World Computing's D3

Iron Angel from Ocean

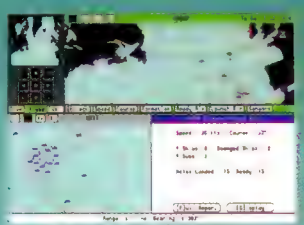
NASCAR Racing by Papyrus

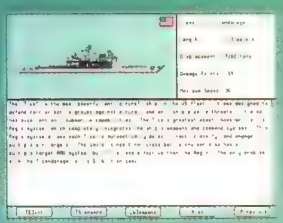
The most popular computer naval simulation ever JUST GOT BETTER!

HARPOON CLASSIC



Harpoon CLASSIC CD is ready to give you hundreds of hours of naval warfare enjoyment. Alliance Interactive Software has updated and combined all the original HARPOON products, added cool new features such as, air-to-air refueling, forty-eight new scenarios, and an enhanced user interface, all to bring you the best of the best. You now have over 200 scenarios, all 4 BattleSets, 3 Designers Series and the Harpoon Scenario Editor on ONE CD-ROM (and yes it runs from the CD-ROM*). Over $300 worth of great naval simulation software, all for only $49.95 (MSRP).





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companion for **Comanche** (which will be re-released in a network-compatible version to play against **Werewolf**, naturally). **Werewolf** simulates the Russian KA-50 Hokum, the old Cold War's perceived competitor with the futuristic chopper modeled in **Comanche**.

Hardwired: As with **Comanche**, *Novalogic* was pretty tight-lipped about the plans for this first-person bi-pedal motion combat simulator cum adventure game. Questions about whether Kyle Freeman might be inventing original new technologies for the design were met with knowing smiles.

OCEAN

Iron Angel: This CD-ROM title places the player in the cockpit of a High Altitude Fighter (HAF), and you will have to use it to shoot lots of things and save the world as we know it (or something to that effect).

PAPYRUS

NASCAR Track Pack: *Papyrus* will be releasing the rest of the NASCAR circuits with the exception of Daytona (which has an exclusive license to some cartridge outfit).

IndyCar Racing: A Mac version of this award-winning game will be released in mid 1995.

NASCAR Multi-Player: *Papyrus* is working with a hardware company that will allow 30+ players to compete in **NASCAR Racing** at the same time.

POWER GAMES INTERNATIONAL

POWER The Game: This is a computer adaptation of a boardgame released in 1979. It is a fast moving strategy game for 1-4 players that is similar in some respects to **Risk** and **Diplomacy**. If you buy the computer version, you get the boardgame too.

PSYGNOSIS

Discworld: An adventure game based on Terry Pratchett's land of humor and fantasy. Former Monty Python member Eric Idle supplies the voice of you, the wizard Rincewind, as you travel through the twin city of Ankh-Morpork and time itself to fulfill his quest of ridding the land of a few nasty dragons. The graphics look really wonderful, with excellent animation, though we'll see how that wacky British humor translates across the Atlantic.

Guilty: This sequel to **Innocent Until Caught** finds our intrepid criminal hero escaping from prison and on a course to confront an alien invasion fleet. With a female partner in tow, you will no doubt have all sorts of encounters that will require you to lie, cheat, and steal to your way to victory. Interestingly, you can play as the criminal or the female partner, who's a policewoman. Hmm, a cop or a criminal. Which do you think most people will choose?

Simon the Sorcerer 2: This sequel to the sadly overlooked adventure that was released here by *Activision* finds Simon trying once again to rid the world of the villain Sordid.

Sherrington Fox: This very British looking game takes place in Victorian England as you guide Piers Featherstonehaugh (ouch, glad I don't have to sign my checks with that) on a mission to save the world from Professor Guttersnipe and his evil genetic experiments.

QQP

Perhaps one of the most curious developments uncovered at CES was the fact that *QQP* had merged with *American Laser Games*. This marriage made in heaven rejuvenates QQP, which had succumbed to some serious debt overload, while infusing *American Laser Games* with some badly needed game design talent. Stay tuned for further details.

Awful Green Thing From Outer Space: Based upon the Steve Jackson boardgame, **Awful Green Thing From Outer Space** is a lighthearted action/arcade romp which should earn a few chuckles come its summer release.

Pure Wargame: This hex based wargame was in a holding pattern for some time but now that *QQP* has some cold cash in hand, you can expect this recreation of airborne battles to parachute onto the market any day now.

Northlands: *QQP* has braved the CRPG waters again this time, unveiling **Northlands.** What makes this title truly unique is what *QQP* calls their "no perspective" overhead view, which actually fluctuates in accordance with the movements of the character. For instance, as a player approaches a doorway between rooms, the player may see the wall from one side and then the other side as he passes through the doorway. Okay, okay, in this case seeing is believing.

The Perfect General II: Work is progressing smoothly on this highly anticipated tactical wargame. The latest iteration will feature a mix of historical and hypothetical campaigns, two sets of SVGA graphics and some sound sampling that really shows off the capabilities of the AWE-32 card.

Card Player's Paradise: Long known for their strong reputation for strategy and card games, **Card Player's Paradise** sports a collection of card games including Rummy 500, Bizeke, Cribbage and Pinnacle. Like **Solitaire's Journey**, a campaign maze will be included only this time the game will incorporate a first-person perspective look and feel.

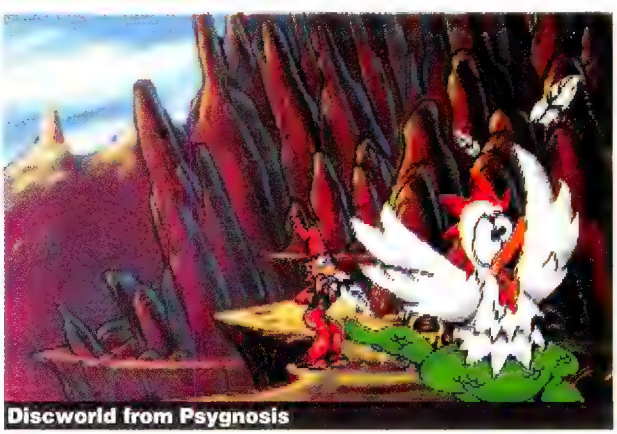
Lost Admiral 2: Harking back to their glory days, **Lost Admiral 2** will not only display a much more graphically appealing map, but the game will include a host of land units to support the naval engagements and, of course, modem play.

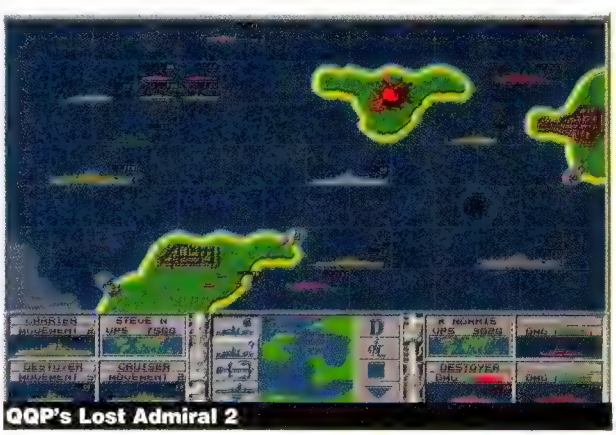
READYSOFT

BrainDead 13: This was another surprising title. This is an original **Dragon's Lair** style adventure featuring some superb animation and sound. You are Lance, the hippest computer repair guru ever seen (oxymoron alert: a hip computer repair techie?), you get a late-night call at the castle of Dr. Neuro Neurosis, who of course has plans for world domination. It's up to you stop him and his half-human, half-pet thingee called Fritz.

ROCKET SCIENCE GAMES

Loadstar - The Legend of Tully Bodine: This is the long-awaited first title from the world's most over-hyped software company. It's a canned-video shoot'em up featuring excellent video cut scenes but limited gameplay. It'll be out any day now. Really.


Discworld from Psygnosis


QQP's Lost Admiral 2

"The designers of this simulation have done their homework and have provided anyone who fancies railroads with a chance to make their dreams come true." **Model Railroader**

"...clearly one of the best simulations of any type - indeed, one of the best games in general - to appear in a very long time." **PC Strategy Guide**

"...here's a nomination for computer game of the year... It's one product that is definitely right on track." **Chicago Tribune**

Overall Game of the Year; "... a lifetime of gaming in one product... CGW's Game of the Year is rcognized because of its unique subject matter, excellent presentation, and exceptional game paly." **Computer Gaming World**

"If not the best, **Railroad Tycoon** is certainly among the best computer games ever created..." **Game Players**

"thoroughly engrossing... may well be the game of the year." **Video Games & Computer Entertainment**

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Strategy Plus writers are hard-core gamers who give their honest opinion of games they have played at length. We give you the previews as soon as the information on titles such as Patriot, Star Trek: The Next Generation, Aces Over Europe, Warlords 2, and Might & Magic 5 is available. Game designers Chris Crawford of Patton Strikes Back, Dan Bunten of Global Conquest, Bruce Shelley of Civilization, Mark Baldwin of Empire Deluxe, John Almberg of Worlds at War and many others, bring you up to date as the design process unfolds. They share their design decisions with you, what's in the game, what might be included and what's been excluded. After the previews, design articles, and reviews we give you detailed game hints and complete walkthroughs for games such as Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, The Dagger of Amon Ra, Ultima 7 Black Gate, Wizardry Crusaders of the Dark Savant, and Might & Magic 4: Clouds of Xeen. The Perfect General, Civilization, Railroad Tycoon, Empire Deluxe, V for Victory, Power Monger, Great Naval Battles and similar games, get coverage with in-depth strategic advice. Computer Games Strategy Plus includes previews, reviews, design articles, game hints, and in-depth play advice for the newest IBM, Macintosh, Amiga, and CD-ROM based computer games.

Cadillacs and Dinosaurs: This title is a, hmm, canned-video shoot em up based on the graphics novels of Mark Schultz. This should be out the same time **Loadstar** hits. Really. We mean it.

Flying Aces: This is a, go ahead and take a guess, canned-video shoot em up with World War I as a backdrop. This too will see the light of day when **Loadstar** hits. We're not joking.

Rocket Boy: This action/adventure allows you take control of a boy and his dog on a weird planet, with loads of 3-D worlds to explore. Try mid-1995 for this one, hopefully without any cans.

Darkride: This Brian Moriarty design is a maze game featuring some stunning graphics (though all we saw was an obviously rendered demo that wouldn't run on any current platform). Look for it in late 1995.

SALES CURVE INTERACTIVE

Hard Corps: This is *SCI*'s entry in the good old fighting game genre. Look for it (with a different title) in the 4th quarter of 1995.

Gender Wars: In the dreary future, men and women have moved so far apart that they've declared war on one another. This will be an isometric action adventure with a release in late 1995.

Lawnmower Man 2: Jobe's War: This game will be released simultaneously with the film of the same name in late 1995.

Kingdom O' Magic: A comedy, this adventure will feature a yet unnamed celebrity for voice-overs.

SANCTUARY WOODS

The Riddle of Master Lu: You are Robert Ripley of *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* in this incredible looking adventure game. The game uses a considerably improved version of the adventure game engine that *MicroProse* developed for **Rex Nebular**. The game has gorgeous SVGA graphics and a story that will take you throughout the world in search of a talisman that can cause all sorts of nasty things to happen if you let it fall into the wrong hands. On the way you will also have to collect the oddities that Ripley was famous for in order to keep your fledgling museum open. This was probably the most pleasant surprise of the show in the adventure game genre. Look for DOS, Windows, & Mac versions of this promising title in mid-1995, and a full preview in *Strategy Plus* even sooner.

Gender Wars from SCI

Buried in Time: This was the second most pleasant surprise of the show. This is the sequel to **The Journeyman Project**, and looks to be quite an improvement over the original (and its **Turbo** follow-up). Look at our **CES Highlight** of it for more information.

SIERRA

Phantasmagoria: The biggest news about this game (which we have previewed in the past) was that it may ship on (gulp) seven, count em, seven CD's, one for each day that the game takes place. By doing this, you should only have to swap CD's when you complete a day. But anyway, back to the game. It's still a psychological thriller featuring you as Adrienne, who, with her husband Don, has moved into a large house once occupied by an illusionist. Weird things happen and it will up to you to solve the mystery. The game features rendered background art, live-action video, and makes claims to be the first completely interactive movie. We shall see this spring.

Space Quest VI: Roger Wilco in Innard Space: In addition to what our bizarre preview on page 40 says about the game, this game takes aim at *Fantastic Voyage* as Roger gets shrunk down and injected into the bloodstream of Stellar Santiago (or is that Carmen Sandiego?), which should allow all sorts of organ humor when it hits this spring.

Woodruff and the Schnibble of Azimuth: The game

CES HIGHLIGHT

THUNDERSCAPE

SSI creates a new world

Thunderscape is the first game in the newest fantasy world created by the *SSI Special Projects Group*. It takes place in the world of Aden, where the Darkfall has spread its evil across the land and the Nocturnals that it is responsible for have become aggressive. The Nocturnals have organized under the command of Anthrax (not the band, you head-banging reader) and threaten to overrun the entire Northlands and turn it into a seething den of depravity and corruption (hmm, it was launched in Las Vegas; coincidence?). At the start of the game, Anthrax has captured the Radiant Castle, a vital location that guards a strategic mountain pass.

Guess whose job it will be to drive the evil from the castle? **Thunderscape** is a CRPG driven by a first-person engine that not only allows full freedom of movement (like **DOOM**), but also allows you to look up and down. Interestingly enough, and I'm sure this will be great news for more traditional role-playing gamers, it uses turn-based combat. When you face a monster, a combat windows pops up on the screen that allows you to select whether to attack or defend.

Thunderscape features 15 different non-player characters, eight of which can join your party to complete the missions. There will be 28 different *SGI* rendered monsters to do battle with (the demo had only one, but it looked quite good even in this early stage), full digitized voice for all characters, and 20 different levels, including catacombs, fortresses, mines, mountain passages, caves, sewers, a Dwarven city, and your final goal, the Radiant Castle.

This *SSI* engine looks incredibly promising, and the conception of the world is quite detailed. The World of Aden will be the basis of an entire line of fantasy products, including a boardgame, card game, novels, and a resource manual. Look for **Thunderscape** in mid-1995.

Thunderscape

Thunderscape

The Riddle of Master Lu by Sanctuary Woods

Star Trek: The Next Generation from Spectrum HoloByte

with the most tongue-twisting title of the show is a game that fans of the puzzle game **Goblins** (and all variations thereof) should love. It's incredibly cute looking, with a lot of hi-resolution animation and good sound.

Front Page Sports Baseball 95: This has tragically been cancelled due to the baseball strike, but in its place *Sierra* will be offering the promised stadium expansion disk, though it would seem available only as a package deal with **Baseball 94**. Hmm...

The Lost Mind of Dr. Brain: The latest Dr. Brain adventure features more of the same humor and puzzles of the original games.

Alien Legacy CD-ROM: This will get the requisite CD-ROM "extra animations and full speech" treatment, which it probably should have had in the first place.

MetalTech: EarthSiege Expansion Pack: This pack will ad new HERCS to blow up and be blown up in, environments to stomp on, and weapons to fire.

Aces of the Deep Expansion Pack: This pack will allow gamers to take command of the Type XXI sub in the waters of the Mediterranean before the craft was used in combat.

Earn Your Wings: This Windows multimedia simulation trainer uses full-motion video to teach flight tactics and includes **Red Baron** to practice with.

The Last Dynasty: Jumping on the interactive movie bandwagon, *Sierra* is releasing this *Coktel* title at a budget price. This MPC2 title will feature hundreds of animations and will be simple enough for novices, challenging enough for action gamers, and have puzzles for traditional *Sierra* fans.

SIMON & SCHUSTER INTERACTIVE

Star Trek Omnipedia: This is the ultimate *Star Trek* resource. For MPC & Mac, it features facts from all of the *Star Trek* series, brief clips from every episode, technical data, hypertext links, renderings, blueprints, photos, and best of all uses voice activation to move around (i.e., say "Spock" and you will find a bio of everyone's favorite pointy-eared Vulcan).

Klingon Immersion Studies: This is an interactive adventure where you become a Klingon and learn their language, culture, lore, and warfare. MPC & Mac.

Macbeth - The Game & Paradise Lost - The Game: We don't know a lot about these titles, but think of the possibilities for games on these works? Weird, eh?

SIR-TECH

Jagged Alliance: The emphasis on this long awaited game has changed slightly, and now it's being billed as a strategic role-playing simulation (did we miss any genre there?). It features an interesting plot, full-speech on the CD-ROM and a non-linear game design. The most important fresh news about the game is that it is now turn-based, instead of phased real-time. Playtesting suggested a turn-based system would be a more satisfying way to go. We couldn't agree more!

SONY IMAGESOFT

Johnny Mnemonic: This game is based on William Gibson's (*Neuromancer*) screenplay for the upcoming Keanu Reeves film (though he does not appear in the game). This MPC & Mac release features excellent nearly full-screen video with a **Dragon's Lair** style of gameplay (i.e., make decisions at certain points of the game that move you on to the next scene and/or advance the plot).

SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE/ MICROPROSE

Top Gun, Falcon 4.0: First, the news is good for both **Top Gun** and **Falcon 4.0**. While the latter is still a ways from being even demoable, the latest on the former is that it is making good use of the technology *MPS* used to develop **F-14 Fleet Defender**. The graphics and flight modeling engines should thus both be top notch, and the in-game action should prove challenging, despite the fact that the instruments and radar/weapons controls are going to be scaled back enough to make the design easy for beginners to get into.

Falcon 4.0 is at the point where the AI for both the user interface and for the campaign engine is starting to look quite strong. The campaign engine is now much more dynamic than the one present in the original **Falcon 3.0**, with both individual and group units making use of precisely modelled weapons and movement capabilities to operate within the computer-run total air defense system, which it will be the player's goal to take apart in preparation for his or her own ground offensive.

Star Trek: The Next Generatoin: The first episode, **A Final Unity**, is still slated for an early 1995 release and looks like it could be a groundbreaking adventure game in all aspects: design, graphics, and sound. It will feature hi-resolution graphics and all of the voices of the actors in the series.

Clockwerx: In their other most popular genre, *SpecHolo* was demo-

Phantasmagoria from Sierra

Sierra's Woodruff and etc. etc.

Space Quest VI also from Sierra

CES HIGHLIGHT

RENEGADE

SSI launches a hot new SVGA space combat simulator

If **Wing Commander III** qualifies as the *Gotterdämmerung* of space operas, **Renegade** looks likely to star as *Tommy* (wha? oh well). Efficient, beautifully illustrated and animated, innovative in the combat options and a blast to play, **Renegade** gets the player right into the business with a minimum amount of fuss.

Your role is to play (at least initially) an interesting anti-hero, a rebellious pilot with an attitude. You've been kicked down the hierarchy to some ugly little outpost, where you're under your last test to see whether you can shape up or be shipped out in an iceball. Trouble is, while you're learning to come to terms with your fate the TOG (Terran Overlord Government) show up and decide to take over the supply station. Your commander disappears under mysterious circumstances, leaving you and your squadron to hold off the TOG until the cavalry show. Chalk up one more victory for rugged individualism against authoritarian corporate group-think if you win!

Renegade features eight different ships for your rebellious pleasure, including among others the *Cheetah*, the *Space Gull*, the *Fluttering Petal* and the *Pegasus*. Each has different strengths and weaknesses, as outlined in FASA's spec (yep, this is a FASA game, but a far cry beyond the original *SSI* effort along these lines), including in at least one instance a cloaking option (makes for some interesting tactics). Twenty-five different types of wingmen/women are available to choose from, and different difficulty levels not only vary play for both novices and advanced sim experts but also change the direction the included story takes during play as well.

One of the most spectacular things about **Renegade** is the smoothness of its SVGA animation; the ships are quite literally photorealistic in detail, but even in the beta previewed just before the show there's no "chugging" during play even on a lowly 486/66 VLB system. Fans looking for variety and simplicity in space combat will love this one.

Renegade

ing a new real-time puzzle game, **Clockwerx**, the next in the line of Alexey Pajitnov-inspired games. **Clockwerx** is kind of like an overhead-view complicated game of air hockey, with clock arms used as the object to be batted between (or connected to) other clock arms to get across the "board." Quite an original design, which *SH* plans to market aggressively and pervasively.

Company news: The big news concerning the *SH/MPS* relationship is that from here on out, *Spectrum Holobyte* will be doing all of the combined companies' modern-day air combat simulations, whereas *MicroProse* will be focused on historically-based sims. This means that an **F-15 Strike Eagle IV**, if any, will be a *SpecHolo* product when it arrives. Since *SH* is already making use of *MPS* technology, this could be more of a technical than design issue, but only time will tell.

Across the Rhine, Magic the Gathering: Meanwhile, *MPS* is gearing up for the release of at least two major new games, **Across the Rhine** and **Magic: the Gathering**. The latter is more definitely slated for Summer 95, the former is planned to ship prior to that, but the company has the resources to let Jim Day and Co. take the time they need to get this cutting-edge, windowing (but not required to run under Windows) 32-bit protected mode product (a first for MPS) absolutely right. The company is pushing hard to make the concept of integrating a serious first-person simulation with a real-time, overhead wargame work well, and by the looks of what was already on the floor, it's likely they'll achieve what they've set out to do. The product is one of the most ambitious things *MPS* has ever done. **Magic** is, of course, well under way, and looks like it will meet the planned deadline easily. The graphics are beautiful and the system is continuing to undergo rigorous testing. Should this effort prove successful, no doubt *Wizards of the Coast* and *MPS* will be pairing up for future productions down the line.

MicroProse Gold Line: The more general strategy for *MPS* right now is to "Gold" the best of their current line, giving **Colonization**, **Pirates Gold** (now to be called **Pirates Gold Gold**?) and **1942:Pacific Air War** the same treatment as **F-14 Defender Gold**. In each case, a CD version will release with the significant addition of multimedia elements, offering, as appropriate, live instruction and historical footage (no archive film of 18th-century pirating has been discovered, but the search continues) to contextualize gameplay. Each effort along these lines seems imaginative and potentially invaluable to players particularly interested in the history surrounding the game they're playing.

1943: This European theatre follow-on to **1942** is in process, but is currently slated for very late 95; nothing was visible on the floor at the show, though some reported goals include possible network play and the development of a more sophisticated career system to integrate into the design.

1942 Gold: This will be the rumoured "mission disk" for **1942**, providing 300 new missions as well as some new, carefully modelled historical planes to fly, along with the above-mentioned multimedia treatment.

SSI

Renegade: See our *CES Highlight* for details on this stunning new space combat simulation, based on the FASA system.

Ravenloft II: Stone Prophet *Dreamforge* continue to churn out steady evolutions of the engine they originally premiered with the first **Ravenloft**, in this case providing even more graphically intense monsters, and even more detailed plot, and a highly-refined role-playing system that is technologically solid enough to give the designers time and energy to focus carefully on game balance and game play.

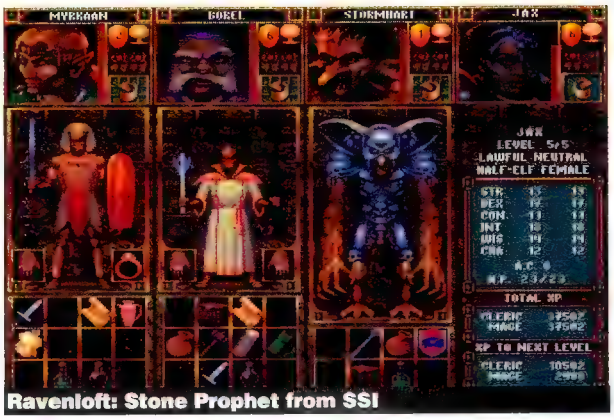
Thunderscape: See our *CES Highlight* for further information; *SSI* is clearly on a roll right now, keep up the good work, folks!

Great Naval Battles III: Many may remain suspicious after the frustrations with the first two **GNB** releases, but be sure that this time around the designers really *have* gotten many things right here. The customization options are likely to insure that whatever interpretation of military and technological (and gameplay) balance you deem reasonable can be tweaked into the design to make for either historically appropriate or exciting (not necessarily exclusive) play.

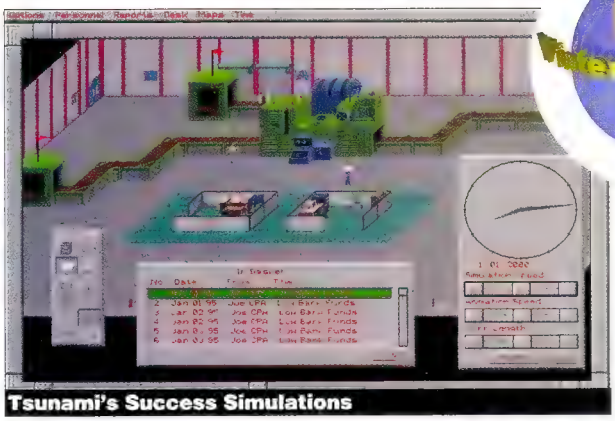
Silent Hunter: Still a ways down the line, this next-generation sub-

1942 Gold from Spectrum Holobyte

Great Navel Battles III by SSI



Ravenloft: Stone Prophet from SSI


Tsunami's Success Simulations

marine simulation from *SSI* not only looks like it'll be competitive in depth and detail with an **Aces of the Deep**, but also seems quite likely to make excellent use of SVGA graphics to provide both station and map-oriented detail which will contribute to the quality of play. Could be a major release.

THE IBM MULTIMEDIA STUDIO

Emergency Room: If you've ever had the hankering to slice open a person and see what makes him tick, then **Emergency Room** may be your cheapest ticket into Med School. The game begins with the player as a med student and progresses through five stages, culminating in the promotion to hospital Chief-of-Staff. Although it's indeed entertaining, this product is crammed with all manner of information to help in your diagnoses and surgical techniques.

All American College Football: *Micro Sports*, long a highly regarded name in sports releases, debuted **All American College Football**. Combining much of the **Pro League Football** flavor with the scholastic grid iron, this football simulation should raise a few eyebrows come next season's kickoff.

TRIMARK INTERACTIVE

Air Havoc Controller: See our comments in *The Hangar* elsewhere this issue. **AHC** is out and shipping but is really quite limited in what it can do.

The Hive: Slated as a "simulation," this really turns out to be yet another first-person shoot-'em-up, without enough detail to qualify as any kind of simulation. Could be a nice action game, though, if you're not tired of the genre yet.

TSUNAMI

Silent Steel: This is their latest interactive movie (in the **Flash Traffic**-style), with DOS and MPEG versions being released in late March.

SUCCESS Simulations: This first-quarter release is an interesting looking simulation of running a shipping and production business. What sets it apart is not its 3D graphics but its use of what *Tsunami* call Interactive Intelligence, which means that each individual employee has unique characteristics that influence your entire workforce. These are entirely customizable, and the game will also learn the decision making process of the player and be able to create a profile of you.

VELOCITY

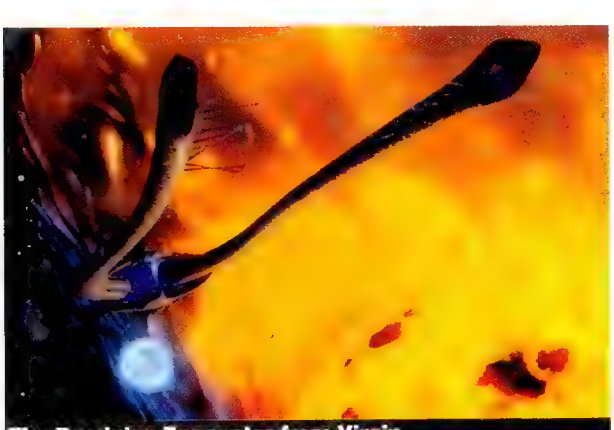
Jet Ski Rage: Now that **Spectre VR** has proven *Velocity* can still deliver winning titles, the latest shoot and scooter down the pike is **Jet Ski Rage**. Utilizing a first-person perspective, this unique jet ski simulation runs amok on the undulating surf of San Francisco Bay, pitting players in a desparate struggle to cross the finish line first, come hell or high water. Network play will also be available.

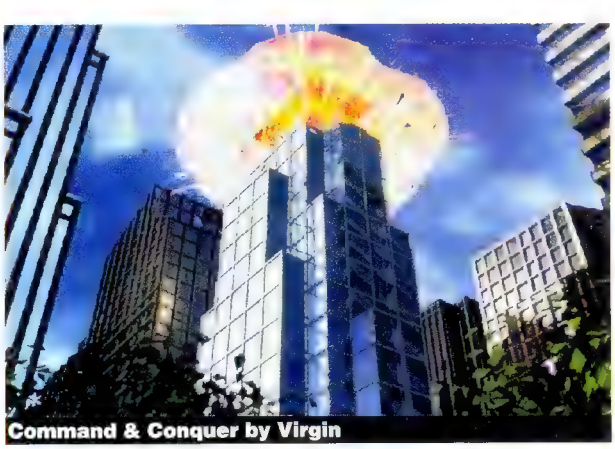
VIRGIN

The 11th Hour: The Sequel to The 7th Guest: Yup, that's the official title. You are Carl Denning, reporter for TV's "Case Unsolved." You are searching for your producer and lover in Henry Stauf's hometown. Not only is live-action video employed, but there is now a feature-length movie included. Also, the graphics are more complex and faster using *Trilobyte's* new and improved compression technology. It will be released for both the PC and the Mac.

The Daedalus Encounter: This game was originally supposed to be released by *Media Vision*, but no longer. It's a video adventure starring "Wayne's World" co-star Tia Carrere as a teammate of the first-person player. It's up to you to discover just what is the deal with a ship that you discover in space. There are multiple plot twists and endings that the player determines, which is supposed to add replay value, plus arcade, fighting, and maze gameplay.

Command & Conquer: This is the new strategy game from *Westwood Studios* using the **Dune II** game engine. It features a science-fiction backdrop as players try to complete dangerous missions in order to secure the rare mineral Tiberium. It features video newscast footage, commercials, and some beautiful 3D rendered art, things that weren't in **Dune II** but will "add immediacy and bring the story to life." It will also feature modem play.❑


The Daedalus Encounter from Virgin


Command & Conquer by Virgin

"ALPHA BRAVO, CONTACT CONFIRMED..."

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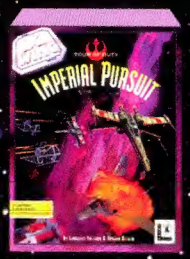

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